WANTING DEMOCRACY

Cases, Theories and Realization

ROSEMARY H. T. O'KANE



ROUTLEDGE

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Representative democracy grew out of struggles by excluded groups demanding a voice in politics. In this book, renowned political theorist Rosemary H. T. O'Kane asks why democracy is so deeply desired, yet why it often falls short in practice. She explores how democratic systems can be strengthened against the pressures that threaten them, showing democracy as a living system shaped by institutions, society and collective action.

Instead of rooting democracy in ancient Athens or engaging in abstract philosophical debates, O'Kane takes a fresh approach. She looks at real historical and contemporary cases (from the Chartists and Russia in 1905 to civil rights movements in Northern Ireland and the United States, and the UK's anti EU campaign) while engaging with classic theories about bureaucracy, political parties, elites and power. These lessons, additionally informed by the cases of India, South Korea, Taiwan and Sweden, are then used to build a 'practical ideal' vision of representative democracy grounded in everyday realities. This practical ideal goes beyond elections and rights to include fair law, neutral bureaucracy and an active society marked by equality, civic participation and concerted action.

By blending case studies with theory, *Wanting Democracy: Cases, Theories and Realization* gives students a clear, accessible framework for understanding both the strengths and the limits of modern democracy today.

Rosemary H. T. O'Kane is Emeritus Professor of Comparative Political Theory at Keele University, UK. Her books include *The Likelihood of Coups* (1987), *Terror, Force and States: The Path from Modernity* (1996), *Paths to Democracy: Revolution and Totalitarianism* (2004), *Terrorism* (2007, 2012), and *Rosa Luxemburg in Action: For Revolution and Democracy* (2015). Her book *The Revolutionary Reign of Terror: The Role of Violence in Political Change* (1991) won the CHOICE Outstanding Academic Book for 1993.

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To Harriet and Frederick

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PREFACE

A chant heard often at protest demonstrations (fill in the blanks) goes as follows:

What do we want? _____
Why do we want it? _____
When do we want it? _____

The answer to the third question is always the same:

When do you want it? NOW

This book fills in the blanks on the first two questions as follows:

What do you want? DEMOCRACY
and
Why do you want it? For REPRESENTATION

This may be the book that I have always wanted to write but, until recently, not known it. Back when still a young lecturer I was in Keele University Library searching for books on the 1917 Russian Revolution when I came across a book on the failed Russian Revolution of 1905. It was probably *The Road to Bloody Sunday* by Walter Sablinsky. Opening it and searching through I happened on the translation of the petition that the procession of St Petersburg workers planned to present to Tsar Nicholas II. Such reasonable requests, so passionately argued: though I knew it well I could not believe the history that followed. A copy of that 1905 petition I lodged in my office; my thoughts stayed with me through years of teaching and writing. Over and over the lesson that democracy is something wanted and, crucially, campaigned for became more and more clear. It was only after

retirement, in the luxury of reading books unconnected with work, that I found time to read every one of *The Collected Short Stories of Saki*. Perhaps because I had been too long away from teaching and also, maybe, because I was hearing so many casual negative comments about democracy, simplified as casting votes and requiring governments to have magic wands that could get things done in an instance, that Saki's *The Comments of Moung Ka* set me thinking more deeply about democracy. So it was that the idea for this book came together and, freed from time spent teaching and marking, I found time to research and write it.

Grateful for the freedom that my emeritus position has brought me I thank Keele University for the facilities, not least access to the Library, that I have been given. I am also grateful for the good luck I have had over the years in my colleagues in the Politics Department at Keele, then as now also my friends. In particular, I thank Brian Doherty with whom I worked most closely. Teaching courses together, he turned my ideas in new directions and to everything brought endless good will. I have also been lucky in my students, who brought reward through their interest in and sometimes love of the subject of politics. I am also indebted to Natalja Mortensen, senior editor at Routledge who has been so encouraging and helpful throughout. I also thank the two anonymous writers of the advisory confidential reports who combined thoughtful and encouraging assessment with constructive suggestions. They and Natalja have helped me to write a better book. Last, but far from least, I remain forever grateful to my family. I write in memory of my dear husband, Les Rosenthal, who stays forever in my thoughts, and my daughter, Harriet Rosenthal-Stott, and grandson, Frederick Stott, who continue to bring me joy.

1
MODERN DEMOCRACY

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> ‘The people of Britain are what is called a Democracy,’ said Moung Ka.
>
> ‘A democracy’ questioned Moung Thwa. ‘What is that?’
>
> ‘A democracy,’ broke in Moung Shoogalay eagerly, ‘is a community that governs itself according to its own wishes and interests by electing accredited representatives who enact its laws and supervise and control their administration. Its aim and object is government of the community in the interests of the community.’
>
> ‘Then,’ said Moung Thwa, turning to his neighbour, ‘if the people of Britain are a Democracy – ’
>
> ‘I never said they were a Democracy,’ interrupted Moung Ka placidly.
>
> ‘Surely we both heard you!’ exclaimed Moung Thwa.
>
> ‘Not correctly.’ Said Moung Ka: ‘I said they are what is called a democracy.’
>
> Hector Hugh Munro (Saki), *The Comments of Moung Ka*, 1993, p. 494

When Saki (Hector Hugh Munro) wrote the short story about the comments made in Burma by Moung Ka, the ‘cultivator of rice and philosophic virtues’ (Munro, 1993, p. 492) and regular reader of the Rangoon news-sheet of world events, Britain was, indeed, ‘called a democracy.’ In the story, Moung Ka’s objection to Britain being a democracy centred on the

British Government's planned partition of Ireland without consulting the electorate. As Moung Ka expressed it:

> The feeling of the people of Britain has not been consulted, and will not be consulted; the Act of Partition will pass through one Chamber where the Government rules supreme, and the other Chamber can only delay it a little while, and then it will be made into the Law of the Land.
>
> *Hector Hugh Munro (Saki)*, The Comments of Moung Ka, 1993, p. 493

In practice, the outbreak of the First World War halted the passage of the Act of Partition. Of the War Saki was to become not just aware but personally involved. Saki would also, most probably, have heard about the Easter Rising that happened in Ireland in 1916, a failed rebellion that aimed to establish an independent Irish Republic, but he would have learned of little more. Saki was a soldier in the First World War and in November 1916 he was in France where he was killed in the Battle of Ancre. So it was that he never lived to know about the partition of Ireland into Southern Ireland and Northern Ireland, made law by the Government of Ireland Act in 1920. Nor was he to hear of the Free State Constitution Act, 1922, under which Southern Ireland became the Republic of Ireland entirely independent of the United Kingdom, while Northern Ireland chose the option of self-government within the United Kingdom. He was also never to be aware of the political violence that preceded, surrounded and succeeded the two Acts; the Irish War of Independence, 1919–1921; 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland, 1920–1922; and the Irish Civil war, June 1922 to May 1923.

In the years when Saki was writing his stories, the partition of Ireland was not the only illustration of the British political system falling short of Moung Shoogalay's eagerly offered definition of a democracy in terms of elected representatives consulting with the people of Britain in order to govern in accordance with the wishes and interests of the community. An obvious problem with the labelling of Britain as a democracy at that time was that 'the community' was far from fully represented. In 1916, the year in which Saki died, only 60 percent of adult males had the vote: namely those who were householders over the age of 21. The percentage of females

with the vote in general elections at that time was zero. In 1918, the Representation of the People Act removed the property qualification so giving the vote to all men over the age of 21. The Act also granted women the vote but for them the property qualification was retained and the age requirement higher. Women had the vote only if over 30 years of age and registered property occupiers, or if they were married to a property occupier and the property occupied had a rateable value of more than five pounds.

Under the 1918 Act, a further advantage was retained by men, by some men at least: plural voting. A second vote was granted to men if they had business premises in another constituency and there were also additional votes for graduates in their University Constituency. To this purpose a total of seven new constituencies were created which elected a total of 14 MPs: five of the seven university constituencies elected two or three representatives and, so, for some this brought more than one additional vote (see Klemperer, 2019). Not until 1928 was full female suffrage, for all women over the age of 21, finally granted.

Though in 1916, the year of Saki's death, only around one third of the adult population had the vote in general elections and that right belonged to only 60 percent of adult males and to no women, the label of democracy was applied, nevertheless, to the British political system and assuredly so.

Representative Democracy

The democracy of modern times – representative democracy – shares with the democracy of ancient times – Greek democracy – a name but little else. 'Demos' is Greek for 'the people.' But in the city-state of Athens, the classic case of Greek democracy, citizens were limited in number not only by the small size of the city-state but also by the exclusion of women and slaves from citizenship. Today, it would not just be the lack of universal suffrage that would be problematic for calling the case a democracy, the sheer existence of slaves in a country would exclude such a case from being considered as a democracy. But it was it was not the exclusion of women and slaves from citizenship that made ancient democracy so different from modern democracy.

In *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (1987), a work in which understanding of democracy is generated through critical assessment of a wealth of theories of democracy, including works in both political philosophy and political science, Giovanni Sartori differentiates between ancient and modern democracy in crucial ways.

In Greek democracy citizens were required to engage in public affairs, indeed were obliged, above all else, to devote themselves to them and, as Sartori (1987, p. 280) expresses it, to 'work for the good of the city.' As such, citizens exercised power directly and there was no separation between the government and citizens as 'the governed.' Crucially, not only therefore, did citizens lack the individual freedom to choose not to participate but also neither could they employ someone – someone perhaps more talented than themselves in argument and logic or understanding of the workings of politics and more comfortable with public speaking – to participate on their behalf.

In contrast, in modern democracy, a system of government designed for countries not city-states where citizens are far (indeed far, far) greater in number, rather than citizens participating on their own behalf, that is directly, citizens elect their representatives – representatives who are professional politicians, comfortable with participation in public life and fully available to participate as their main occupation. Rather than having to devote themselves to public affairs, citizens in modern democracy, thereby, have the freedom to have a private life, separate from politics.

In short, Greek democracy took the form of citizens – the demos – exercising power directly on their own behalf ('direct democracy') while representative democracy has the form of citizens exercising power indirectly through representatives ('indirect democracy'). The consequence of this, Sartori (1987, p. 280) explains, is that the political system of modern democracy 'largely amounts to a system of limitation and control of power'. Limitation and control, that is, of the representative government and, as will be argued, other sources of power, too.

It is because representative democracy is designed, in large part, as a system of limitation and control of the government by citizens that elections are an essential feature of the system of government. Elections are needed not only to elect representatives but also for their removal when judged inadequate to their task of representation. Elections, it follows, are also needed for the formation of governments and for their removal, too, for

elections are about registering whether citizens, taken together, want, on balance, to change the government or to continue to support it.

That elections register whether, in general, citizens support or reject the government draws attention to representative democracy being not simply concerned with being responsive to citizens' interests in the sense of representatives acting as their delegates but also, in line with Saki's Moung Shoogalay's definition of democracy, being responsible to the community as a whole. This, as neither Moung Shoogalay nor Saki's Moung Ka fully grasped, means that sometimes representative democratic governments serve interests about which citizens may not have formed opinions.

Governments of representative democracies have the dual roles of being responsive to citizens and also being responsible for the community and, so, judging what is in the best interests of the community. Sometimes, therefore, in representative democracy the government must act ahead of the community knowing what its best interests are or reacting to unforeseen events for which opinion has neither had time to form or to be weighed.

Governments sometimes needing to act ahead of citizens, knowing their interests and having to judge what would be in the community's best interests is yet another reason why elections are important. For, if the government's decisions are later judged, in the balance of opinion measured by the votes cast, to have been wrong then the government can be removed and replaced at the next election.

In acting in the community's best interests, representative governments have the difficult task of representing both minority and majority interests and of balancing those interests in a way acceptable to the community as a whole. This, too, makes modern democracy very different from ancient democracy.

In Greek democracy, citizens debated with a view to reaching a consensus. In contrast, representative democracy is a political system built on what Sartori (1987, p. 290) terms 'a dissenting consensus.' As he explains:

> Above all, modern democracies are related to, and conditioned by, the discovery that dissent, diversity and 'parts' (the parts that become parties) are not incompatible with social order and the well-being of the body politic.

Giovanni Sartori, The Theory of Democracy Revisited, 1987, pp. 288–289

Dissent, diversity and difference form the foundation of representative democracy and it is not just a case of political parties with different and divergent positions and policies competing for votes at elections that are important. Representative democracy extends beyond political institutions into society. With the freedom, unlike in ancient democracy, for citizens to have a life separate and away from politics and to have choice as to whether or not to participate and to do so indirectly, citizens thereby are free to form voluntary associations, quite independent of the state, and bring pressure to bear on governments outside of elections. This, too, is part of the design of the system of representative democracy in its aims to represent interests and to limit and control power.

Representative democracy is a political system that values difference and diversity and is designed to resolve the problem of there being different views on issues with different interests involved and to resolve the problem peaceably. It is in this light of modern democracy as a system of decision-making based on Sartori's 'dissent, diversity and "parts" (the parts that become parties)' and one that 'largely amounts to a system of limitation and control of power' that understanding can be brought to why, in Saki's story 'The Comments of Moung Ka,' the political system of Britain was held up to be a democracy before then being brought down to being labelled as 'what is called a democracy.'

What Moung Shoogalay, in Saki's story, had failed to capture in his definition of democracy in terms of representing 'the interests of the community' and what Moung Ka had failed to consider in his objection to the government's handling of the Irish Question for failing to consult 'the feeling of the people of Britain' were the different and opposed positions involved. A democracy, of the modern, representative kind, is a system built on the recognition that interests are not the same for everyone: not the 'feeling' of the people, therefore, but their various, sometimes conflicting and sometimes unresolvable, 'feelings.'

The British political system was called a democracy a century and more ago, even when suffrage was so restricted and representation of interests therefore significantly less than full, because it was constructed to accommodate the reality that interests differ and, therefore, to facilitate

debate for resolving decisions. There was a parliament for debating policies and legislation was decided on the basis of having the support of the majority of the members of parliament. Those members were elected to represent their constituencies and not only those and not simply those who had voted for them in the election.

The nature of the elections was also critical. They were competitive, held between parties organized to represent different, often opposed, interests with policies set out before the election. Those who had the vote could choose to vote for the party that best represented their interests and the government was formed on the basis of the party that gained the largest number of representatives (seats) in the election and those representatives (members of parliament) were elected on the basis of who had received the largest number of votes in each constituency. The regular elections were also a means for the limitation and control of the government in power, for through them members of parliament could lose their seats and governments could be ejected from office.

Summary and Conclusion

Modern democracy differs from ancient democracy in being indirect and not a direct form of democracy. In consequence there is separation between the government and citizens as 'the governed.' Citizens in modern democracy, not being obliged to engage in public affairs, have the individual freedom to choose not to participate in voting on issues and also to choose representatives (more suited, for example to public speaking) to act on their behalf. Elections, therefore, are necessary, though not sufficient, for modern democracy: necessary both for choosing representatives and for removing them. Having individual freedom, citizens in modern democracies also have the freedom to form or join political organizations and movements independent of government and non-political voluntary associations too.

Because modern democracy is representative democracy it also differs from ancient democracy in not seeking consensus but recognizes differences of opinion and interests – so not the 'will of the people' but the 'wills of the people' – and, in consequence, the political system must be

constructed to accommodate differences. Representative democracy is a political system that values difference and diversity and is designed to resolve the problem of there being different views on issues with different interests involved and to resolve the problem peaceably. Being based on representation rather than on achieving consensus, governments of modern democracies are sometimes required to make judgements about what is in the best interests of citizens and of the community as a whole. Not only does modern democracy, therefore, require a political system with institutions and practices able to achieve representation of citizens and ones with diverse interests, it also needs to be a system that is able to limit and control power, not least that of the representatives and the government formed through election.

Given the promise of representative democracy and that governments could be changed if judged failing in their promise, it is unsurprising that those denied the possibility of taking part in the election of representatives – of representatives who are both willing and able to represent the interests of those excluded from representation – would want to organize with the aim of being included in a system of representative democracy.

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Wanting Democracy

Petitions, Movements and a Referendum

INTRODUCTION

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Modern democracy – representative democracy – is designed to represent the interests of citizens and for governments to be voted out of office if they do not. It is no wonder, therefore, that those excluded from taking part in the election of representatives would want to organize with the aim of being included. Considering such organized attempts, the nature of their interests and their successes and failures in comparative perspective offers a means for understanding democracy not simply as a theoretical ideal but as a practical ideal.

Developing understanding not only of why people want democracy but also of what they want from democracy and their chances of achieving them are here drawn from the cases of the Chartist Petitions of 1839, 1842 and 1848, the 1905 Russian Petition, the Civil Rights movements in the United States and Northern Ireland and the case of the EU debate and 2016 Referendum in the UK. The Chartists petitioned an existing representative democracy for inclusion of working class men. Russian workers, in 1905, petitioned to be included not in an existing representative democracy but for one to be set up in which they and all others would be included. In the United States and Northern Ireland civil rights movements campaigned in existing representative democracies from which they were excluded through unequal treatment. The campaign in the United Kingdom against membership of the European Union focussed on the EU's lack of democracy. Consideration both of the arguments made in that campaign and of the conduct and outcome of the 2016 referendum generates a focus on some of the theoretical requirements of democracy.

Through the examples of these cases of petitions, civil rights movements and a referendum, comparisons made between them and lessons drawn an understanding is developed of why representative democracy is not only wanted but also what is expected of it in terms of what interests need to be served. The lessons drawn also point towards the kinds of conditions that are conducive to democracy and also points toward the theoretical requirements of representative democracy and necessary components of a representative democratic political system.

2
PETITIONING FOR REPRESENTATION

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News of democracy as a system for representing interests had been heard not only in Saki's Moung Ka's Burma (Munro, 1993). In Russia, an autocracy, people had heard of the system of democracy and not just heard of it: workers and their families gathered in St Petersburg to form a procession in quest of its advantages. The purpose of the procession was to hand in a petition to Nicholas II, the Tsar of Russia. The petition had been drawn up by Father Georgy Gapon, who was a priest and the organizer of the Assembly of Russian Factory and Mill Workers of St Petersburg, and Ivan Vasimov, a steel worker. The Assembly had been legally established in February 1904 and the petition had been signed by around 135,000 people. The procession was organized two days after a spontaneous general strike had broken out in the city. The day of the procession was 9 January (22 January as it was to be recorded 13 years later on the modern calendar). The year was 1905.

In the bitter cold of that midwinter day, the workers and their families marched, unarmed and in a peaceful and orderly way, towards the Winter Palace. They totalled around 16,000 people, many of them carrying portraits of the tsar and religious items including icons (Sablinsky, 1976, p. 232).[1]

Russian Petition, 1905: The Principal Request

Carried at the head of the procession as it made its way towards Tsar Nicholas's Winter Palace, the petition put forward a request viewed as fundamental to the entire petition: 'our principal request, upon which everything else depends.' The request was for democracy; democracy not as a general ideal but a specific kind of democracy. What the petitioners were asking for was representative democracy and the petition set down the request in the following way:

> Russia is too vast, and her needs are too great and manifold to be dealt with exclusively by the bureaucrats. Popular representation is essential; it is essential that the people help themselves and govern themselves. Truly, only they know their real needs. Refuse not their help, accept it and command representatives of the Russian land, of all her classes, of all estates, as well as representatives of the workers, to gather without delay. Let these include a capitalist, worker, official, priest, doctor, teacher—let everyone, whoever he may be, elect his representative. Let everyone be free and equal in his choice, and for this purpose let the elections to the constituent assembly be conducted under conditions of universal, secret and equal suffrage.
>
> *Russian Petition 1905*

As these words from the petition make clear, representative democracy was viewed as a system needed for large countries ('too vast') with multiple group interests ('too great and manifold,' 'all her classes, of all estates of the realm'). In such a large and complex society it was accepted that it would be impossible for each member of the community to speak for themselves. As the words of the petition also made clear, the system of representative democracy entailed the election of representatives to parliament by universal suffrage (women as well as men, the above translated text using 'his' rather than the more modern usage of 'their') in secret ballots with each vote counting as equal.

Chartist Petitions, Britain, 1839 to 1848

The ‘principal request’ of the 1905 Petition in Russia had much in common with the Chartist petitions presented to parliament in the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland first in 1839, again in 1842 and, for the third and last time, in 1848. Like the Russian 1905 Petition, the Chartist petitions set out that votes were to be conducted by secret ballot with votes to count equally and did so through making similar claims of people needing to help and govern themselves because only they knew their interests. Unlike the Russian petitioners, however, the Chartist Petition, as presented to parliament in June 1839, asked not for universal suffrage but for universal adult male suffrage; for men, that is, over the age of 21.

> As a preliminary essential to these and other requisite changes; as means by which alone the interests of the people can be effectually vindicated and secured, we demand that those interests be confided to the keeping of the people.
>
> When the state calls for defenders, when it calls for money, no consideration of poverty or ignorance can be pleaded, in refusal or delay of call.
>
> Required, as we are universally, to support and obey the laws, nature and reason entitle us to demand that in the making of laws, the universal voice shall be implicitly listened to.
>
> We perform the duties of freemen; we must have the privileges of freemen.
>
> We demand universal suffrage.
>
> The suffrage to be exempt from the corruption of the wealthy, and the violence of the powerful, must be kept secret.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1839*

The initial idea for the petition, which had been drawn up at its first meeting by the London Working Men’s Association (LWMA) in February 1837, had included female as well as male suffrage but this had later been dropped (Briggs, 1959, p. 23, fn. 6). Following on from the LWMA’s initial idea for the petition, two conferences took place in 1837 between the LWMA and radical members of parliament sympathetic to the cause. At the second of the two meetings, held in June, a committee was appointed, consisting of six representatives of the LWMA and six of the MPs, to draw up, what they called ‘a petition for universal suffrage’ (Taylor, 1999, p. 11).

Spurred on by William Lovett, one of the LWMA representatives, the ‘petition for universal suffrage’ was published in May 1838 and, in place of its less catchy title, ‘Outline of an Act of Parliament to provide for the Representation of the People of Great Britain in the Commons House of Parliament’ it became known as the ‘People’s Charter.’ It was from the popular name for the published outline petition that the Chartist movement took its name and it was the virtues of this Charter that was promoted at public meetings and gatherings, nationally (see Briggs, 1959, pp. 23–24).

The Chartist movement, like that of the Russian petitioners, was a mass, essentially working class, movement, in which a workers’ organization, the LWMA and the Assembly, respectively, played an important part. Unlike the Russian case which was restricted to one city, St Petersburg, the Chartist movement was national. It was launched and sustained through large-scale meetings and gatherings held in, though not restricted to, predominantly industrial areas of Britain. As illustration, it was calculated that on Whit Monday in 1839 a quarter of a million people attended a meeting held at Peep Green, Yorkshire (Randall, 1999, p. 171). Peep Green was accessible from the vastly expanded industrial areas, not least those of Bradford and Leeds.

Not only were mass meetings and gatherings held nationally, where signatures to the petition were able to be collected, but Chartists also went door-to-door to collect signatures. In consequence, the Chartist petitions had far more signatures than the Russian petition. As stated in their presentations to the House of Commons, the first petition had 1,280,958 signatures and was close on three miles long. The second had 3,315,642 signatures. The claim made by the Chartists for the third petition was 5,736,000 million signatures on a petition weighing ‘five-ton’ but the claim was disputed. The assessment made by the Commons authorities of the 1848 petition was 1,975,496 genuine signatures on a petition that weighed only a quarter of a ton (Brown, 1998, pp. 107–109).

The Chartist petitions were delivered to the House of Commons, where they were presented and debated. All three Chartist petitions, however, were voted down. The 1839 Petition was rejected by 235 to 46 votes. The petition was then re-presented, in re-worked form, in 1842 and in 1848. The 1842 Petition was again rejected, this time by 287 to 49 votes. The 1848 Petition was, as Briggs (1959, p. 410) puts it, ‘laughed out by the House of Commons.’

Three Petitions: Six Points for Electoral Reform

The People's Charter that had been drawn up in May 1838 by the London Working Men's Association included all of 'the six points,' which phrase was used widely from 1840, though only five of the points were to appear in the 1839 Petition (Taylor, 1999, p. 1). The 'six points' of the "People's Charter" were summarized by Thomas Duncombe, the Whig MP for Finsbury, in his speech introducing the second Chartist Petition to the House of Commons in 1842 'as embracing the representation of male adults, vote by ballot, annual Parliaments, no property qualification, payment of members, and equal electoral districts' (Chartist Petition, 1842). Equal sized constituencies was the 'point' left out in the 1839 Petition. The publication of the People's Charter fed into the drafting of the final petition that was presented to the House of Commons, in June 1839, by Thomas Attwood, MP for Birmingham. The petition as presented had been drawn up by the Birmingham Political Union (BPU), of which Attwood was its leader.[2]

The 1839 Petition opened with a portrayal of the nation's peace and prosperity from which the petitioners gained no benefit and then, following a brief account of their social and economic grievances, stated:

> It was the fond expectation of the people that a remedy for the greater part, if not for the whole, of their grievances, would be found in the Reform Act of 1832.
>
> They were taught to regard that Act as a wise means to a worthy end; as the machinery of an improved legislation, when the will of the masses would be at length potential.
>
> They have been bitterly and basely deceived.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1839*

The 1832 Reform Act increased representation through creating new constituencies and reducing the number of old boroughs so to allocate the number of MPs more in line with population increases, of particular importance for the large industrial areas. The Act also introduced a residence requirement for the registration of voters. The Act increased suffrage by, in the counties, broadening the property requirement so giving the vote to small landowners, tenant farmers and shopkeepers and, in the

boroughs, extending the vote to all those paying a yearly rental of at least ten pounds (UK Parliament, no date). In consequence, the number of those with the right to vote increased, though by only 300,000, at most, and, it followed, that the large majority of working class men still could not vote (Klemperer, 2019, p. 4).

The Reform Act of 1832, stated in the petition to have 'bitterly and basely deceived' the petitioners, had done so not only because it had disappointed expectations in the reforms contained in it, not least the small increase in suffrage, but also because the years from 1832 to the 'People's Charter' of 1838 were viewed as having demonstrated the reformed House of Commons as incapable of representing workers' interests. The disappointment began with the Factory Act of 1833, which was designed to protect child labour, but had not gone as far as wanted and expected. Anger then grew, in 1834, when six labourers in Dorset, who became known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs, were arrested for forming a trade union to fight against a cut in wages and then received the harsh sentence of transportation to Australia. It led to widespread protests. In the same year, adding to feelings of deception and anger, the Poor Law Amendment Act was introduced.

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act had as a main aim that of reducing the cost of poor relief. In place of the previous system of out-relief the Act introduced a system which laid down that relief could only be received by entering a workhouse. These workhouses, which quickly became labelled Bastilles ('Poor-law Bastiles' in the 1842 Petition) in reference to the infamous prison of the 1789 French Revolution, provoked riots with intent to destroy them. The Poor Law Commission, which was set up to administer the system uniformly, initially concentrated on rural areas but in January 1937 the Commissioners directed their attention to the industrial areas. Their arrival in the north of England coincided with the onset of economic depression which brought an upsurge of unemployment among factory workers and starvation to handloom weavers. (For the above two paragraphs see Briggs, 1959, pp. 10–13; Taylor, 1999, p. 9.)

The petitioner's feelings of having been deceived by the reformed House of Commons in not representing their interests were heightened in 1837 when the elections of that year reduced the number of radical MPs. Then, in 1838, restrictions were put on the debating time for petitions. This was the only legitimate avenue open for the non-elected to have their opinions expressed, directly, in the House of Commons (Taylor, 1999, pp. 7–10).

The expectations raised by the 1832 Reform Act, in combination with the deep disappointment of the experience of the reformed House of Commons in representation of the petitioners' interests, shaped the petition's political demands. So, as explained, the 1839 Petition stated, 'as a preliminary essential … as a means by which alone the interests of the people can be effectually vindicated and secured, we demand that those interests be confided to the people' and went on to 'demand universal suffrage' and that votes 'must be kept secret.' In addition to demanding universal male suffrage and secret ballot the other four of the six points demanded in the petitions – that elections should be held annually, that there should be no property requirement for standing for election, that members of parliament should be paid and that constituencies should be single member and contain equal numbers of voters – were argued as follows.

The 1839 Petition argued for annual elections on the basis of the relationship between constituent and representative needing to be 'intimate' and possible errors being made far worse if not able to be corrected quickly but allowed to grow worse over years. As the 1839 Petition summarized its position: 'To public safety as well as public confidence, frequent elections are essential. We demand annual Parliaments.' The 1842 Petition simply drew on tradition: 'That your petitioners can prove, that by the ancient customs and statutes of this realm, Parliament should be held once in each year.' The 1848 Petition drew attention to the current practice of elections being held every seven years and the injustice of this for voters attaining the age of 21 who could have to wait to vote for up to six years. It also expanded on the first petitions' reasoning:

> [Y]our Petitioners also consider that seven years is too long a term for the existence of a parliament; a period that affords an opportunity to venal and time-serving men to promote their selfish interests, at the expense of those whose welfare should be the ultimate aim of all their labours. Your Petitioners therefore entreat your honourable House to create between the representative and the represented that salutary responsibility indispensable to good government, by the restoration of the ancient wholesome practice of annual Parliaments.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1848*

The argument for Members of Parliament to be salaried and membership not to be based on property qualifications, likewise, was made in all three petitions. In the 1839 Petition it was made in the Prayer of the Petition:

> That they would abolish all property qualifications, to entitle parties to sit in their honourable House; and that all Members elected to sit in Parliament, should be paid for their services.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1839*

The demand was re-affirmed in the 1842 Petition and the 1848 Petition not only made clear that MP's salaries should be paid from taxation, as had the first petition, it also classified the elected representatives as 'servants of the people':

TABLE 1 Summary of petitioned demands

Chartist Petitions 1839, 1842 and 1848	*Russian Petition 1905*
• Universal male suffrage • Voting to be by secret ballot • Constituencies of equal size and single member • Annual parliamentary elections • Members of parliament to be paid • Abolition of property requirement for standing as an MP	• Universal Suffrage (male and female) • Voting to be by secret ballot • Votes to count as equal

> That your Petitioners hold the Legislature equally with the Executive, to be the servants of the people, and consequently entitled to remuneration at the public expense; and, believing that the House of Commons should be the minister, and not the master, of the people, call upon you to establish their relative positions by fixing an equitable salary for the services of its members.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1848*

The demand for constituencies of equal size was made in the second and third petitions. The 1842 Petition gave striking examples ‘of the enormous inequalities existing in what is called the representation of this country,’ one being the borough of Guildford with a population of 3,900 returning the same number of MPs as that of Tower Hamlets with a population of 300,000. The petition then demanded ‘equal electoral districts.’ The demand was clarified in the 1848 Petition as follows:

> [Y]our Petitioners regard the present inequality of representation to be opposed to common sense, and inimical to a genuine representation of the people. They therefore appeal to your honourable House to remedy this defect in the legislative machinery, by the division of the country into equal electoral districts, assigning to each district one representative.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1848*

Summary Comparison of Petitioned Demands

The closeness between the Chartist and Russian petitions in respect of the first three demands suggests that not simply elections but elections conducted according to universal suffrage, voting by secret ballot and votes counting as equal could be viewed as essential characteristics of representative democracy. The further political conditions requested in the Chartist petitions indicate, however, that if the first three requirements are necessary they cannot be viewed as sufficient to constitute modern democracy.

Competitive Elections, Parties and Governments

The Chartist and the Russian petitions each saw elections as essential not simply for the purpose of choosing representatives but also for representing and furthering the interests of those who had elected the representatives. The demand made by the Chartists for annual parliamentary elections additionally signified that elections were thought necessary not only to elect

representatives but also as the means to keep the representatives in check and to remove them if those interests, for which they have been elected to represent, failed to be judged sufficiently furthered. While the frequency of annual elections might prove both too disruptive and prohibitively expensive, regular elections not too far apart are important for holding governments and representatives at all levels of society to account.

The Chartists' other demands, that members of parliament should be paid and that there should be no property requirements for candidates to be allowed to stand for election, point to the recognition that representatives should be professional politicians and to the need for the levelling of the political playing field. Such levelling would ensure the possibility that workers could be represented by people who truly understood the problems faced by working people – people like themselves.

Lacking direct discussion, the Chartist petitions seem to imply that the expanded electorate of workers would, initially at least, vote for one or other of the two existing parties: at the time, the Conservative Party and the Whig Party. The 1839 Petition argues 'the range of our choice must be unrestricted' but relates this not to types of parties but to the need for the representatives not to be 'men who are incapable of appreciating our difficulties.' The implication of voters choosing between two parties would fit with the idea of parties having programmes broad enough to attract votes across groups of interests.

The stipulation in the Russian Petition of 1905 that all of Russia's classes, and all of Russia's estates along with workers, must have representatives and emphasising this by stating 'Let these include a capitalist, worker, official, priest, doctor, teacher—let everyone, whoever they may be, elect his representative', would, given all the different interests needing to be represented, fit better with the possibility of multiple political parties with some concentrating on the representation of different class or estate interests.

These differing possibilities of types and numbers of political parties point to the crucial importance of there being more than one party in order that a choice can be made on the basis of the interests represented by each party. Clearly there is no point in having the vote if there are no competing representative groups – political parties – that offer policies to represent the voter's interests and it is because not all interests are the same that it is essential that representative democracy has more than one party.

Competition for votes by organized political parties is a mechanism for ensuring that policies to represent differing interests are offered. Universal suffrage with parties competing for votes provides the means for ensuring that interests are represented and it is why, therefore, universal suffrage and more than one party in competition in regular (free and fair) elections are essential features of representative democracy.

Consideration of parties representing interests in competition for votes at elections raises the possibility of the different types of government that might emerge. In the first case, voters choosing between two parties with each representing a broad range of interests would produce a government formed entirely of the party that gained the majority of seats in the election. In the second case, the existence of multiple parties each representing narrower ranges of interests, would fit with governments consisting of coalitions of parties. There would also be no reason to expect the institutions and rules of representative democracies to look exactly the same. Electoral systems, for example, vary widely in respect of the ballot structure, the constituency size and the formula for transferring votes to seats (Carter, Farrell and Loomes, 2024). Rather, the institutions and the rules of the representative political system would be likely to be chosen and evolve so to be appropriate for the number and nature of the differences and divergences of views and interests in the community. For example, where interests differ from region to region a federal rather than a unitary system would seem appropriate; the number of parties, too, might grow in accordance with the complexity of groups and divergence of interests.

One thing is sure, in representative democracy there would always be a legislative body of government – parliament, congress, senate, synod or by whatever name – formed of elected representatives, elected through competitive elections with political parties fought on the basis of competing policies, from which, according to agreed, set-down, rules the government would form.

Identifying Interests

Both the Chartist and the Russian petitions argued not only for inclusion in representative democracy as a means for the representation and furtherance of the petitioners' interests and set out what political requirements the

democracy must have in order to represent and further their interests but also set out what those interests were. In short, both the Chartist and Russian petitioners were agreed in pleading for an end to social and economic suffering, for the freedoms of association and of opinion and, also, for equality before the law.

Social and Economic Interests

The Chartist Petitions

Submitted to Parliament at a time of economic depression and the workhouses of the harsh Poor Law, the 1839 Petition opened with observations about the prosperous and peaceful condition of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and then moves to draw the contrast with the conditions faced by workers:

> Yet with all these elements of national prosperity, and with every disposition and capacity to take advantage of them, we find ourselves overwhelmed with public and private suffering.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1839*

The petition then expands on the starvation conditions of poverty brought on by high taxation, unemployment and low wages:

> We are bound down under a load of taxes; which, notwithstanding, fall greatly short of the wants of our rulers; our traders are trembling on the verge of bankruptcy; our workmen are starving; capital brings no profit and labour no remuneration; the home of the artificer is desolate and the warehouse of the pawnbroker is full; the workhouse is crowded and the manufactory is deserted. *[For 'artificer' read craftsman.]*
>
> *Chartist Petition 1839*

The policies required to address this suffering is then stated, in no uncertain terms, in a single paragraph:

> We tell your Honourable House … that the laws which make food dear, and those which, by making money scarce, make labour cheap, must be abolished; that taxation must be made to fall on property, not on industry; that the good of the many, as it is the only legitimate end, so must it be the sole study of the Government. *[By 'industry' is meant not factories and plants but hard work; for 'property' read wealth.]*
>
> *Chartist Petition 1839*

With the exception of the declaration 'that the great end of all governmental institutions should be the protection of life, the security of property, the promotion of education and morality, and the diffusion of happiness among all classes,' the 1848 Petition focuses entirely on political reform. The 1842 Petition, however, the longest and most comprehensive of the three petitions, pays a great deal of attention to social and economic concerns:

> That taxation, both general and local, is at this time too enormous to be borne; … That in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, thousands of people are dying from actual want; and your petitioners, whilst sensible that poverty is the great exciting cause of crime, view with mingled astonishment and alarm the ill provision made for the poor, the aged, and infirm; and likewise perceive, with feelings of indignation, the determination of your honourable House to continue the Poor-law Bill in operation, notwithstanding the many proofs which have been afforded by sad experience of the unconstitutional principle of that bill, of its unchristian character, and of the cruel and murderous effects produced upon the wages of working men, and the lives of the subjects of this realm.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

In addition to highlighting the existence and cruel consequences of poverty and condemning the Poor Law of 1834, the exhausting nature of the work carried out by both factory workers and agricultural labours was stressed:

> That your petitioners complain that the hours of labour, particularly of the factory workers, are protracted beyond the limits of human endurance, and that the wages earned, after unnatural application to toil in heated and unhealthy workshops, are inadequate to sustain the

> bodily strength, and supply those comforts which are so imperative after an excessive waste of physical energy.
>
> That your petitioners also direct the attention of your honourable House to the starvation wages of the agricultural labourer, and view with horror and indignation the paltry income of those whose toil gives being to the staple food of this people.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

The unfairness of the treatment of workers was further emphasized by their earnings being compared with the enormity of the state funds given to the queen and to the prince consort and also the millions used to 'maintain a church establishment.' In particular, the Archbishop of Canterbury's earnings of £52 10s per day were contrasted with the 'thousands' of poor families that had to live on two pence per head per day. Furthermore, this objection was broadened to reflect the nonconformist beliefs held and practised by the Chartists with their complaint about the enforced 'compulsory support of religious creeds, and expensive church establishments, with which the people do not agree.' The 1842 Petition also complained of 'the many grievances borne by the people of Ireland.'

Russian Petition 1905

Whether because of or in spite of the speed at which it was written, the 1905 Russian Petition, was more systematic than the Chartist petitions in detailing the interests of those the petition referred to as the 'toiling classes.' In reflection of Russia at the time the 'toiling classes' were identified as workers in factories and plants, peasants, sailors and soldiers. Described as 'needs,' the social and economic interests of the toiling classes, as in the Chartist petitions, concerned poverty, taxation, unemployment, working conditions and wages.

As part of the explanation given for the decision to strike in January 1905 and to appeal directly to the tsar, the petition outlined the attempt to make request to their employers for improvements to their conditions which had led to the start of the strike on 3 January after the right to speak for their needs had been refused and dismissed as illegal.

> According to our employers and managers, our demands turned out to be illegal, our every request a crime, and our desire to improve our conditions an insolence, insulting to them.
>
> *Russian Petition 1905*

The strike had occurred over the unjust dismissals of workers at the Putilov Works in St Petersburg. The plant, huge in size, engaged in shipbuilding and arms production and employed 12,000 workers. Workers at the plant formed a significant proportion of the membership of the Assembly of Russian Factory and Mill Workers of St Petersburg, which was led by Father Gapon.

The Assembly had only existed since the autumn of 1903 and had been given legal approval in February 1904, less than a year before the petition procession. At first limited to the Putilov Works, the strike had spread and the idea of a general strike and for a petition to be presented to the tsar then took off – and with it the view that Father Gapon should draft it. The petition was ready on 7 January, by which time almost all of St Petersburg was on strike. Father Gapon proposed the peaceful procession as the means for the delivery of petition to the tsar, arguing: 'Let us go with our wives and our children to the Winter Palace on Sunday at 2:00 p.m. Let us go quietly and peacefully, and we will be heard' (Sablinsky, 1976, p. 171). (For the paragraph see pp. 85–97 and pp. 143–171.)

The demands made to the employers and managers at the Putilov Works, which refusal had led to the spontaneous strike and on to the petition and so to the procession, had been for an eight-hour day, to negotiate wages and disputes with lower-managerial staff, for a minimum wage for unskilled working men and women of a rouble a day, for the end of overtime, for better care for the sick and for workshops with protection from deathly weather conditions (Sablinsky, 1976, pp. 344–345). In the 1905 Petition directed to the tsar, these requests were repeated along with others all listed and numbered, under the headings 'Measures to eliminate the poverty of the people' and 'Measures to eliminate the oppression of labour by capital.'

II. Measures to eliminate the poverty of the people

1. Abolition of indirect taxation and the introduction of a progressive income tax.

2. Abolition of the land redemption payments, cheap credit, and the gradual transfer of the land to the people.
3. Contracts for orders of the war and naval departments are to be made in Russia and not abroad.
4. Termination of the war in accordance with the will of the people.

Russian Petition 1905

Point 2 relates to the burdens imposed after the end of serfdom; points 3 and 4 are connected to the war with Japan in which Russia was embroiled at the time. The contracts referred to in point 3 include, for example, those in ship-building.

'Measures to eliminate the oppression of labour by capital' are more directly concerned with working conditions.

III. Measures to eliminate the oppression of labour by capital

1. Abolition of the system of factory inspectors.
2. Establishment in factories and plants of permanent elected worker committees, which are to participate with management in the consideration of worker grievances. Workers must not be discharged without the consent of these committees.
3. Freedom of cooperative associations and professional worker unions is to be allowed without delay.
4. An eight-hour workday and strict regulation of overtime work.
5. Freedom of the struggle for labour against capital is to be allowed without delay.
6. Immediate establishment of normal wage rates.
7. Participation of representatives of the working classes in the drafting of a bill for state insurance of workers is indispensable, and is to be put into effect without delay

Russian Petition 1905

Concentrating on alleviation of poverty, addressing working conditions and proposing freedoms of association for workers and their participation in the drawing up of policies in which they were directly affected, the two sets of

measures reflected not only conditions in Russia at the time, but also indicated the more general importance to the petitioners of fairness and equality and of representation beyond the political system. The concern for fairness and equality is evident in the requests for a progressive income tax and for the transfer of land, in the need for workers not being discharged without good reason and in the freedom to form cooperatives and unions and in protecting, through 'state insurance' the inequalities faced by the sick and the unemployed.

In line with the petitioners' concern with fairness and equality, under 'Measures to eliminate the ignorance of and arbitrariness toward the Russian people,' the petition also demanded political rights and freedoms and equality before the law. It is of note that these measures preceded the two other lists of measures; also of note are the striking similarities with these measures and the demands made for political rights and freedoms, and for equality before the law in the Chartist petitions.[3]

Political Rights and Freedoms and Equality before the Law

Russian Petition 1905

I. Measures to eliminate the ignorance of and arbitrariness toward the Russian people:
    1. The immediate release and return of those who suffered for their political and religious convictions, for strikes and peasant disorders.
    2. An immediate proclamation of freedom and inviolability of the person, freedom of speech, press, association, and worship.
    3. Free universal and compulsory public education, financed by the State.
    4. Responsibility of the ministers before the people and guarantees that the government will act according to law.
    5. Equality of all before the law without any exceptions.
    6. Separation of the church from the state.

The Chartist Petitions

In alignment with point 2 in the Russian petition's measure against ignorance and arbitrariness, the 1842 People's Charter states:

> That your petitioners know that it is the undoubted constitutional right of people, to meet freely, when, how, and whether they choose, in public places, peaceably, in the day, to discuss their grievances and political or other subjects, or for the purpose of framing, discussing, or passing any vote, petition, or remonstrance, upon any subject whatsoever.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

Just as the 1905 Russian Petition made reference to the petitioners' earlier attempt to engage in negotiation with their employers that was dismissed as illegal and the consequent treatment – which found its way into the demand made for the 'immediate release and return of those who suffered for their political and religious convictions, for strikes and peasant disorders', point 1 – the 1842 Chartist Petition made reference to a trial and harsh treatment of protesters, of which the petition 'viewed with great indignation the partiality shown to the aristocracy in the courts of justice, and the cruelty of that system of law.' The petition elaborated as follows:

> That your petitioners complain that the right has unconstitutionally been infringed; and 500 well disposed persons have been arrested, excessive bail demanded, tried by packed juries, sentenced to imprisonment, and treated as felons of the worst description. That an unconstitutional police force is distributed all over the country, at enormous cost, to prevent the due exercise of the people's rights.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

The trial referred to was that of John Frost, Zephaniah Williams and William Jones. It had been held in Monmouth in November 1839, five months after the first petition had been presented to parliament. Frost, Williams and Jones were Welsh Chartists and the main leaders of the Newport Rising, a mass protest involving 7,000 miners and iron-workers who had marched there from South Wales (Brown, 1998, p. 62). The

Newport Rising took place following the rejection by the House of Commons of the first Chartist Petition; frustrated by the constitutional method adopted by the Chartists, the Rising's immediate aim was the release from prison of Henry Vincent, one of the Chartist leaders. Some of the protesters had arrived armed and a large number of special policemen and also soldiers had been brought in to await their arrival. Deaths and injuries resulted.

Frost, Williams and Jones were each found guilty of treason and were sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered, which sentences, following a campaign of nationwide petitioning, were commuted to transportation for life. The '500 well disposed persons' who had been arrested and 'treated as felons of the worst description' mentioned in the 1842 Petition referred to those arrested in the days that followed the Newport Rising. They were tried for treason not individually but as a mass: the last such mass-treason trial in Britain (Brown, 1998, p. 62).

Similar to points 4 and 5 in the Russian petition's list of 'Measures to eliminate the ignorance of and arbitrariness toward the Russian people,' which demanded ministers to act responsibly and government to 'act according to law' and for 'equality of all before the law without any exceptions,' the 1842 Petition linked this prevention of the exercise of people's rights and the setting up of the police force to the furtherance of the interests of the rich and powerful and then to link this with the Poor Law in consequence of 'the increased desire on the part of the irresponsible few to oppress and starve the many.' The 1842 Chartist Petition then further complained:

> That a vast unconstitutional army is upheld at the public expense, for the purpose of repressing public opinion in the three kingdoms, and likewise to intimidate the millions in the due exercise of those rights and privileges that ought to belong to them. [*The 'three kingdoms' being: England and Wales; Scotland; Ireland.*]
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

Democratic Society

In making their arguments in support of their economic, political and legal demands both the Russian and the Chartist petitioners had done more than simply set out their interests and indicate the measures that would be required to satisfy and protect their interests. They had also pointed to the kind of society in which they wished to live and the kind of society that they expected their inclusion in representative democracy would bring. As the 1839 Chartist Petition stated:

> Universal suffrage will, and it alone can, bring true and lasting peace to the nation: we firmly believe that it will also bring prosperity.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1839*

As the 1905 Russian Petition put it:

> [O]nly with their [the listed measures] fulfilment can our Motherland be emancipated from slavery and poverty, only then can she prosper.
>
> *Russian Petition 1905*

It would be the kind of society in which representative democracy would thrive. As consideration of the complaints and demands made in the petitions have shown, it would be a society not at war but at peace; a fairer and more equal society both socially and economically; a society without poverty and exploitation in which there would be equality before the law. It would also be a society in which, guaranteed in law, there would be political rights and freedoms for all.

As referred to above, the 1842 Chartist Petition had stated 'the undoubted constitutional right of people, to meet freely … to discuss their grievances and political or other subjects, or for the purpose of framing, discussing, or passing any vote, petition, or remonstrance, upon any subject whatsoever' and applied that stated constitutional right to their demand for equality of treatment in law and in its exercise both by the judicial system and the police force.

The Russian Petition of 1905, too, had set out, through their lists of needs, a society in which there would be freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of conscience (accompanied by the absence of a state religion) and equality before the law. It had then expanded this view to include there being the right to strike and

involvement in war being only with citizens' consent. Furthermore the envisaged fairer and more equal society would also be free from violence and insult; hence the demand for 'an immediate proclamation of freedom and inviolability of the person, freedom of speech, press, association, and worship.' The Russian petition also made explicit that it would be a society where there would be universal education paid for by the state.

The 1905 Russian Petition not only argued for a society that would be fair, open and peaceful, it also specified under the heading 'Measures to eliminate the poverty of the people' that economic equality would be a goal sought by government. The 'need' for indirect taxes to be replaced by a progressive income tax concerned the fairer and more economically equal society that representative democracy was expected to bring and was also required for the operation of representative democracy to its full potential. So, too, the needs stated for the burden of the redemption payments and cheap credit that followed the end of serfdom to be ended and for peasants to have their own land were viewed as necessary for the achievement of a fairer and more equal society. Similarly, the need for the war (with Japan) to be ended, in accordance with, as the petition put it, 'the will of the people,' was in recognition of the hardship faced unequally in the war's consequence and the need for interests (not least those of soldiers and sailors and their families) to be represented.

Importantly, too, under 'Measures to eliminate the oppression of labour by capital,' the Russian petition was concerned not simply with need for conditions of work to be regulated: there would be an eight-hour day and protection for fair wages. The petition also made clear that in the democratic society democratic practices would permeate into society beyond the narrow confines of politics. Point 2 argued for elections to be extended to factories and plants for 'permanent elected worker committees.' Point 3 highlighted the importance of the representation of group interests through the existence of independent associations in society and the economy: taking the form, respectively, of trade unions and cooperatives. Point 7 extended the conception of representative democracy beyond elected government into a wider view with working class representatives participating in the drafting of bills relevant to their interests: the example being for workers' state insurance.

As the Russian Petition of 1905 stated, representative democracy was not simply their request it was their 'principal request upon which

everything else depends.'

Conclusion

Consideration of the two petition cases suggests that the political institutions, rules and procedures would not be the same in every representative democracy. Being based on valuing disagreement and diversity and on the limitation and control of power, in representative democracies the holding of elections with competing political parties offering polices that reflect different interests or different combinations of interests is essential. In order that diverse views are fully represented it is also necessary that elections are conducted according to universal suffrage, secret ballot and votes counting equally.

The presence of elections fought between competing political parties conducted according to universal suffrage, secret ballot and votes counting equally would not, however, be sufficient for the political system to count as modern democracy. Regular elections being not spaced too far apart, salaried members of parliament and there being no property requirement for being a candidate for election are other necessary, though not necessarily sufficient, requirements.

As both the Chartist and Russian petitions made clear, representative democracy is not only a matter of necessary political institutions and procedures, representative democracy also requires the law to apply equally and fairly to all citizens and for there to be political rights and freedoms: at the least, those of speech, of assembly and of the press. As the petitions also showed, representative democracy requires a more economically and socially equal society and one where there is protection for citizens in times of adversity. Furthermore, representative democratic institutions and procedures need to exist not only in respect of central government but also to permeate through society.

In short, in order that citizens can participate equally and so count equally in their representation, citizens must be equipped through economic well-being, be strengthened by respect being shown to all and have the legal rights to form associations and actively to pursue furtherance of their

interests. Representative democracy is a means to a better society. As the 1839 Chartist Petition had it:

> [T]hat the good of the many, as it is the only legitimate end, so must it be the sole study of the Government.

Notes

1. Estimates made at the time of the total number of men, women and children in the procession varied. The petition simply claimed ‘many thousands’ (Russian Petition 1905). In his autobiography, Father Gapon, who marched in the procession, put the figure at over 20,000; in the ‘Lawyers’ report’ (1905 Document 62) the figure is put at 4–5,000 while the police report (Document 36) puts the figure at 2–3,000 (Sablinsky, 1976, p. 239, fn. 32). ⏎
2. For interactions between the Birmingham Political Union, which had been set up in 1829 and published its ‘national petition’ in the same month and year as the People’s Charter, and the London Working Men’s Association in the drawing up of the petition presented to the House of Commons and events around it, not least those concerning debates about the use or not of physical force, see Briggs (1959, pp. 23–28). ⏎
3. The exceptions are for universal education and separation of church and state which feature as points 3 and 6 in the list of measures to eliminate ignorance and arbitrariness in the Russian petition but are absent in the Chartist petitions. As explained, there is mention of religion in the 1842 Petition but it is with respect to the cost to the state of the established church and education is mentioned in the 1848 Chartist Petition but in connection with a declaration about ‘the great end of all governmental institutions’ rather than made as a demand. ⏎

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3
CONTRASTING PETITION OUTCOMES

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While clear similarities in the reasons for wanting representative democracy are to be found in the Russian Petition of 1905 and the Chartist Petitions of 1839, 1842 and 1848, their outcomes were very different.

Russia

With an earlier attempt by the Russian workers to petition their employers having been rejected and dismissed as illegal and faced with a political system in which participation was denied to them, the Russian petitioners, as representatives of 'the entire toiling class of Russia' appealed directly to Tsar Nicholas II. The petition was headed 'A most Humble and Loyal Address' and stated that it was 'Intended for presentation to HIS Majesty.' It opened with 'We, the workers and inhabitants of St Petersburg, of various estates, our wives, our children, and our aged, helpless parents, come to Thee, O SIRE, to seek justice and protection' and it earnestly requested that he would help them 'out of the slough of poverty, arbitrariness, and ignorance' (Russian Petition 1905).

Tsar Nicholas II was not, however, in the Winter Palace to receive the petition. Though fully aware that it was to be handed in, he had chosen to continue his stay away in his Summer Palace some 30 miles from St

Petersburg. In any case, the Tsar there or not, the procession never even got as far as the Winter Palace. Under orders to prevent the procession reaching its destination, the marchers were fired on by troops – troops not only those local to St Petersburg but also battalions ordered in from outside. Arriving from Saturday evening to Sunday morning 9,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry were positioned to move towards the Palace Square (Sablinsky, 1976, pp. 229 and 230 fn. 3). Not only were many petitioners killed and wounded but, elsewhere in the city, further massacres of peaceful demonstrators took place with troops firing at close range into tightly-packed crowds. (For a full account of events see Sablinsky, 1976, pp. 246–260.)

The massacres of peaceful demonstrators in quest of representative democracy and better working conditions in St Petersburg in January 1905 hit the headlines of the international press. In time, 9 January (old calendar; 22 January on the new calendar) 1905, became known as 'Bloody Sunday.' In reflection of the day's shocking nature, the numbers of killed and wounded were greatly over-estimated at the time. For example, the *Manchester Guardian* initially reported a total of 24,000 killed and wounded which was later corrected to 2,000 killed and 4,000 wounded (Sablinsky, 1976, p. 261).[1] The figure now accepted is considerably lower at around 200 people killed and a further 800 wounded (Brown, 2009, p. 42).

The Bloody Sunday massacre of peacefully demonstrating, unarmed men, women and children, set in train the Revolution of 1905. The day after Bloody Sunday workers went on strike in Moscow and strikes then spread across Russia. Nearly half a million workers were on strike by the end of January and the strikes were joined by large numbers of students and the 'intelligentsia'; in June, sailors on the Black Sea fleet flagship – the battleship Potemkin – mutinied in Odessa. Disturbances then began to build in the rural areas and, in October, the entire railway system was at a halt (Wheatcroft, 1983, pp. 78–79).

The revolution failed. On 17 October the Tsar agreed to make concessions. In the October Manifesto some civil liberties and an elected parliament, the State Duma, were promised. Though revolution continued in the Kingdom of Poland through into 1906, within the main body of Russia the October Manifesto, in combination with violent crackdowns carried out mainly by Cossack regiments, had the effect of ending strikes and revolutionary action by December. In the event, however, the

constitution allowed only a narrow suffrage and Tsar Nicholas II retained the autocratic power to veto any legislation. He also had the right to disband the Duma in the event of its failing to reach agreement. The Duma started out weak in relation to the power of the monarch and over the subsequent Dumas, four in total, became successively weaker (Sakwa, 1998, pp. 12–14).

After the 1905 Revolution, Tsar Nicholas II remained in power for 12 years but was finally overthrown in the Revolution of 1917. It had not, however, been the desire to overthrow the Tsar, the desire for revolution that is, that had spurred the men, women and children to take part in the procession in 1905. The petition had simply requested the Tsar to intervene on the behalf of Russia's toiling classes in the setting up of a representative democracy in which their interests, along with those of all classes would be represented: 'let everyone, whoever he may be, elect his representative' (Russian Petition 1905).

That the Tsar paid no heed to the request is hardly surprising. The 'toiling classes,' for whose interests the petition had been drawn up, constituted the major proportion of Russia's population. In 1905, the vast majority of the Russian population worked on the land. The 1897 Census for Russia counted, out of the total population of 125.6 million, 96.9 million 'members of the peasant estate': under the legal definition peasants thereby constituted 77.1 percent of the total population.[2] On broader definitions of the peasantry, to include those working as rural artisans and traders the figure rises to around 80 percent (Moon, 1996, pp. 141–142, 151). There were also around 3 million members of the 'toiling classes' working in factories (Wolf, 1973, p. 74) and soldiers and sailors to be added, too.

The granting of universal suffrage to peasants and rural artisans and traders, factory workers and soldiers and sailors would have meant that the interests of those who worked on the land and in factories would have overwhelmed the interests of those with power vested in the current system. Power is not surrendered without a determined effort to retain it. Such determined effort does not, however, mean that the inevitable consequence of petitioning for representative democracy is revolution.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Chartist petitions, too, were rejected by those determined to preserve their power and privilege. But the Chartists had from the start the support of radical MPs, six of whom had been members of the committee that had drawn up the People's Charter. Unlike the Russian petition that had not been allowed to even get as far as the Winter Palace – to be presented to a Tsar who, in any case, wasn't even there – the Chartists had, at least, been able to hand their petitions in, have them introduced to parliament by an MP and, though heavily defeated each time, have them debated in parliament. They gained support from 46 and then 49 MPs in 1839 and 1842, respectively. Though the 1848 Petition had been laughed out it had had the distinction of being introduced by a Chartist, Feargus O'Connor, who had been elected to parliament as MP for Nottingham in 1837. O'Connor was the first Chartist MP, though also the last (Brown, 1998, p. 47).

Unrest had followed the parliamentary defeats in both 1839 and 1842 and, in consequence, troops totalling 7,123 officers and men (Mather, 1959, p. 163) were sent to support the thousands of special constables in London in the days before the planned petition procession and meeting to be held on Kennington Common in April 1848. In the event the procession was banned and though the meeting went ahead the supporters accepted Feargus O'Connor's request for those attending to go their separate ways peacefully (Brown, 1998, p. 107 and for above).

In the face of the third defeat in parliament of the petition and the threat of state violence in reaction to future mass meetings and demonstrations, the mass movement was weakened. Harsh police reaction to localized Chartist meetings and violent incidences in the following months and the arrest, in August, of Chartist leaders led, by the end of the year, to the complete collapse of the Chartist movement as a mass movement. The last time that the People's Charter was debated in parliament was in 1850 when it was raised by O'Connor in his capacity as an MP, though not through the presentation of a newly prepared petition at the behest of a mass movement campaign. Reforms in line with those campaigned for by the Chartists were, however, gradually introduced through parliament and, unlike the October Manifesto in Russia, they were real reforms and not just empty promises.

Suffrage in the United Kingdom was widened in 1867 and 1884. In 1867 the vote was granted to men over the age of 21 who paid an annual property rental of at least ten pounds. This meant that men qualifying for the vote

rose from one million to two million out of an adult male population of seven million. In 1884 this qualification was extended to the countryside and the vote also given to adult males holding land valued at ten pounds. It was by this Act that 60 percent of males over the age of 21 became qualified to vote: the situation at the time of Saki's death, in November 1916, added to the total of soldiers killed in World War I. In 1872, the Ballot Act made ballots secret. In 1885, the population of constituencies were equalized by the Redistribution of Seats Act. In 1911, salaries began to be paid to Members of Parliament. In 1918, as noted, universal male suffrage was finally achieved. Thus all but one of the Chartists demands were eventually fulfilled: the one remaining, and to this day, being that for annual elections.

Though never meeting the Chartists' demand for annual elections, in other ways reforms went on to exceed their demands. The right of women to vote was first debated in the House of Commons in 1867 at the time of the Second Reform Act. Though the idea was roundly dismissed at the time, suffrage was extended to women in the Representation of the People Act of 1918 for those, that is, who were over 30 years of age and registered property occupiers or married to a property occupier and the property occupied had a rateable value of more than five pounds. Women's right to vote had been campaigned for by the women's movements: the 'Suffragists,' the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, formed from local campaign organizations in 1897; and the 'Suffragettes,' the British Women's Social and Political Union, WSPU, which formed in 1903. Women's suffrage was also a policy of the Labour Party, established in 1900, which developed out of the trade union movement. In 1928, the vote was extended to all women over the age of 21. Notable, too, though not requested by the Chartists, was the legislation passed by parliament in 1871 that legalized trade unions, for which the trade union movement had campaigned.

Tentative Lessons from Comparing Differences

Based on comparisons between just two cases, lessons drawn can only be tentative but the striking differences between the experiences following the Russian and Chartist petitions invite a search of conditions that may provide

receptive soil for the establishment and growth of representative democracy. As explained, after the petition march in Russia in 1905 first a failed revolution occurred, in 1905–1906, and then a successful one, in 1917. Neither of the revolutions brought representation to workers within a representative democracy. In stark contrast, as also explained, in Britain after the deliveries of the Chartist petitions – the last in 1848 – five out of the six demands were eventually met through reforms brought by acts of parliament.

Peace and War

One clear difference between the two cases is that, unlike Russia in 1905, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was not at war in the years of the Chartist petitions: not in 1839, not in 1842 and not in 1848; not with Japan, as was Russia; not with any country. As the Russian Petition listed in its 'Measures to eliminate the poverty of the people,' one of the 'needs' was 'termination of the war in accordance with the will of the people' (Russian Petition 1905). Being at war puts extra economic and social pressures on the population, the poorest being hardest hit. Indeed, it is of note that the Chartist Petition of 1842 specifically complains of the burden of taxes increased by war with the repercussion of raised taxes carrying on for decades into times of peace:

> [Y]our petitioners complain that they are enormously taxed to pay the interest of what is termed the national debt, a debt amounting at present to £800,000,000, being only a portion of the enormous amount expended in cruel and expensive wars for the suppression of all liberty, by men not authorised by the people, and who, consequently, had no right to tax posterity for the outrages committed by them upon mankind. And your petitioners loudly complain of the augmentation of that debt, after twenty-six years of almost uninterrupted peace, and whilst poverty and discontent rage over the land.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

The financial burden when being at war not only puts extra economic and social pressures on the population, with the poorest being hardest hit, it is also likely to heighten awareness both of their social and economic interests

and, when protest is met with coercion, the harsh consequences of interests being ignored is additionally felt. In contrast, in a country not involved in foreign war, protest at home is likely to seem less threatening to stability and, unburdened by the immediate financial costs of the war, government budgets may, if the government is so willing, be more able to respond to demands.

In 1914, Russia was again engaged in war, this time in World War I, and the revolution occurred while the war continued, with the war not being brought to an end for Russia until March 1918. After the Tsar had been overthrown, in February 1917, elections based on universal suffrage to a Constituent Assembly were promised but were not held until 12 (25 on the new calendar) November 1917. The Bolsheviks who had taken power in October (25 October/7 November) allowed the elections to be held but, in January 1918, at its first and only meeting, the democratically elected Constituent Assembly was dissolved (Carr, 1966, pp. 119– 129).

The lesson is that the chances for democracy to be achieved and then to be sustained is likely to be greater for countries that are not at war but at peace. A likely lesson, also, is that the nature of government policies is not to be ignored.

Socio-economic Differences

Another difference between the two cases, and also a reason why the Chartist petitions were less detailed on economic demands than the Russian petition, was that social and economic conditions in United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland between 1839 and 1848 were less acute than those in Russia in 1905. Certainly there was poverty, as the 1839 Chartist Petition made clear:

> We are bowed down under a load of taxes; …our traders are trembling on the verge of bankruptcy; our workmen are starving; …the warehouse of the pawnbroker is full; the workhouse is crowded and the manufactory is deserted.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1839*

Distressing though this depiction of conditions is, the contrast with the desperation expressed in the opening paragraph of the Russian petition's

paragraph is striking.

> We are impoverished; we are oppressed, overburdened with excessive toil, contemptuously treated. We are not even recognized as human beings, but are treated like slaves who must suffer their bitter fate in silence and without complaint. And we have suffered, but even so we are being further pushed into the slough of poverty, arbitrariness, and ignorance. We are suffocating in despotism and lawlessness. O SIRE, we have no strength left. And our endurance is at an end. We have reached that frightful moment when death is better than the prolongation of our unbearable sufferings.
>
> *Russian Petition 1905*

In the United Kingdom, furthermore, though there was severe economic depression at the start of the 1840s, with very high wheat prices, an upsurge of unemployment among factory workers and starvation among handloom weavers, the harvests of 1842 to 1844 were good and wheat prices had fallen nearly 30 percent between 1839 and 1844. In addition, though suffering was far from ended, unemployment improved in the cotton industry in 1843 and though not yet in the iron, coal and woollen industries, by 1844 recovery was more widespread. Furthermore, with the exception of a downturn in the latter months of 1847, the decade as a whole was marked by economic growth (Brown, 1959, p. 368).

What was so very different between the UK in the 1840s and Russia in 1905 was that the UK had an economy primarily concerned with manufacture while Russia had a primarily agricultural economy and, crucially, this was reflected in their social structures.

Whereas in Russia in 1905, as explained, according to the 1897 Census, approximately 82 percent of the Russian population worked on the land, social divisions in Britain were very different. When the Chartists' first petition was debated in parliament, in 1839, rather than the workforce being largely made up of peasants, as in Russia, in Great Britain, more than half a century earlier, according to the 1841 Census those working in agriculture were only 22 percent (Vision of Britain, no date). Furthermore, there were no peasants in Britain: the figure of 22 percent was largely made up of agricultural labours. Also of note, unlike the Russian peasants, workers in

Britain did not carry the extra burden of the redemption payments that had been imposed at the end of serfdom.

The comparison between Russia and Britain is also in stark contrast in respect of the working class. The figure for Russia in the 1897 Census was around 4 percent working class; in Britain, in 1841, the percentage of those in 'trade and manufactures' was 46 percent. This figure included shopkeepers and manufacturers as well as all of those employed by them but it does not include domestic servants and general labourers. A figure of, at least, 50 percent being working class in Britain (that is, in England, Scotland and Wales) is likely, therefore, to be a reasonable calculation. (For the above statistics see Vision of Britain, no date.[3])

In addition, whereas in Russia, according to the 1897 Census, the middle class (defined as merchants and businessmen, non-high ranking civil servants and professionals, such as doctors and lawyers) constituted just 1.5 percent of occupations, in Britain the middle class was far larger. The exact figure is difficult to assess on available statistics: the figure of 32 percent, which is the remainder of occupations classified as 'miscellaneous' is too high because it includes domestic servants and general labourers as well as 'professional persons' but a reasonable estimate would be that the UK's figure for the middle class was around ten times higher than that for Russia (see Vision of Britain, no date). Importantly, too, unlike in Britain where businesses were independently owned and developed, in Russia, which had come late to capitalism, industries were state-sponsored (Beetham, 1985, pp. 204–205).

A number of possible lessons follow from comparison of socio-economic conditions in the Russian and Chartist petition cases. One is that extreme poverty is not fertile soil for representative democracy, perhaps especially if the population is overwhelmingly made up of peasants (as opposed to agricultural workers). Another is that industrialization offers positive advantages but only if industrial enterprises are developed through initiative independent of the state and, in consequence, the middle class is relatively large and there is economic growth (as in Britain in the 1840s). Yet another possible lesson points, more broadly, to the differences in the complexity of the social structure and not only in respect of the middle class and its relationship to ownership of capital but also in respect of the professionals grouped within the category. Crucially, too, the differences in

the relative sizes of the working class and the roles they played in each case cannot be ignored.

The working class in Great Britain was far larger in proportion to its population, in 1841, than was that of Russia, in 1905, but in both cases it was the working class who played crucial roles. It was workers who formed the procession in Russia 1905; it was workers who formed the backbone of the Chartist movement; it was workers' signatures that formed the bulk of the Russian and Chartist petitions; and it was workers' organizations – the Chartists, the London Working Men's Association and the Assembly of Russian Factory and Mill Workers of St Petersburg – that were so crucial to the petitioning for representative democracy. The size of the working class in Russia was, perhaps, simply too small to sustain the push for their representation in a representative democracy, whereas, in Great Britain, the far greater size in proportion to the rest of the population provided the necessary weight not just to push for representative democracy but to keep on pushing after each rejection of their petition. And, in Great Britain, it was not only workers in industry who played their part but also agricultural workers, too, and, in addition, members of the middle class, not least the radical Members of Parliament and the Birmingham Political Union. And mention of those MPs and of the role of working class organizations draws attention to another set of possible lessons to be drawn from comparison of the two petition cases: those relating to political conditions both before and after the presentation of the petitions.

Parliament and Bureaucracy

The 'arbitrariness,' 'despotism' and 'lawlessness' described in the 1905 Russian Petition draws attention to the differences between the political systems in Russia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in respect of the roles played both by the parliament and by the bureaucracy. Russia in 1905 had an autocratic system, the Tsar having absolute power. The system was administered by bureaucrats, whose role it was to carry out the Tsar's decrees. Bureaucrats were viewed as corrupt and both arbitrary and punitive in their behaviour. In the words of the 1905 Petition:

> The workers and the peasants are delivered into the hands of the bureaucratic administration, comprised of embezzlers of public funds

> and robbers, who not only care nothing for the needs of the people, but flagrantly abuse them.
>
> *Russian Petition 1905*

In the United Kingdom, with its constitutional monarchy, rule was through parliament. It was another reason why the Chartists' demands could be more specifically political than those of the Russian petitioners. The role of the bureaucracy was to serve the government and to implement the laws set by parliament and the factory inspectorate established by the 1833 Factory Act, which – though disappointing the expectations of workers – was evidence of the developing role of bureaucrats serving the interests of those without power: in this case that of child workers. Appointment to the bureaucracy, however, was through patronage until 1853; reforms in the years 1853 and 1854 then introduced a system based on merit, assessed by public examination (Britannica, no date). By the 1850s, therefore, the bureaucracy was very different from that in Russia in 1905.

In the United Kingdom, furthermore, as explained, steps had been made prior to the first Chartist Petition towards a more representative political system through the 1832 Reform Act. The Act had widened the franchise, to include some in the middle class at least; had created new constituencies to include industrial areas and removed others that contravened the notion of representation through having very few voters; and had also tied registration of voters to residency. Though the petitioners felt 'bitterly and basely deceived' by the Act because the reformed House of Commons was judged by the Chartists as having failed in representation of workers' interests, the Act together with the debate both before and after it had highlighted the values of representative democracy and it showed that pressure through parliament could, as it had for some of the middle class, have a positive effect in achieving electoral reforms.

Crucially, unlike in Russia, not only were there prior political institutions upon which and through which representative democracy had the potential to be built, but also the campaign fought for representative democracy brought further benefits. Through their mass campaign for representation the Chartists gained experience both in organization and in the workings of the institutions and processes of the political system to be used in the practice of pressure for reform without mass movement organization.

Though O'Connor was the only Chartist ever elected to parliament, many Chartists stood for election to the House of Commons from 1839 to 1848. Furthermore, through to the 1850s, Chartists and ex-Chartists were successful in local government elections, where voting, though varying from place-to place, was generally less restrictive. By the end of the 1840s, well-documented examples record Chartists and ex-Chartists sitting on the town councils of Birmingham, Bolton, Bradford, Leeds, Manchester, Rochdale and Sheffield. From those positions in local government they continued to pursue Chartist reforms by, for example, opening the meetings to public scrutiny; requiring the elected representatives to give regular accounts of their activities to their constituents and to resign if called to do so by them; and, not least, through their continued pressure for suffrage to be extended in local elections. (For the above see Taylor, 1999, pp. 17–18.)

The UK case illustrates the setting up of representative democracy in a piecemeal, slow approach: each piece of legislation having time to be tried out and 'bedded in' before the next, with lessons being learnt about how to proceed. As the Chartists and ex-Chartists elected to local government showed, this approach has advantages not only for the legislators in parliament and for the bureaucracy but also for the protesters, who gained experience of taking action, setting up campaign organizations and the consequent development of the value of participation.

In contrast, in Russia not only had the autocratic system prevented experience of representation but the organization that had drawn up the petition and planned the march had been established for less than a year, and the October Manifesto – in which the Tsar retained the power of veto over legislation and could dissolve parliament – created a weak parliament with elections based on a highly restricted suffrage. In essence, Russia after 1905 continued with autocracy and through repression stifled further pressures for representative democracy.

Conclusion

Lessons drawn between just two cases are necessarily tentative but some, nevertheless, stand out. One is that the chances for representative democracy to be achieved and then to be sustained and developed over the longer term is likely to be greater for countries that are at peace. Another is

that more complex social structures where the working class and the middle class are relatively large are also an advantage – as, too, are working class organizations. A piecemeal, slower pace approach to setting up democratic institutions where rudimentary democratic political institutions exist and experiences of organization and participation is possible is also advantageous: such an approach is beneficial to legislators, bureaucracy and protesters for whom taking action and establishing campaign organizations has the potential to widen participation and strengthen the value placed on it. Another lesson is that in representative democracy, bureaucracy must neither be arbitrary in its carrying out of duties nor be corrupt: the purpose of a bureaucracy in a representative democracy is to serve the interests of citizens.

Notes

1. *The Daily Mail* reported 30,000 casualties, the French newspaper *Le Temps* reported a witness claiming to have counted 2,195 corpses in the 15 out of the total 46 hospitals visited in St Petersburg. For discussion of reports, estimates and personal accounts and recollections see Sablinsky (1976, pp. 261–268). ⏎
2. The 1897 Census classifies according to categories such as members of the hereditary nobility, those in the church, petty bourgeoisie, peasantry and so on rather than according to a list of employment categories able to be categorized into classes. Peasantry is a single, undifferentiated category (Sacks, 1986, p. 103). ⏎
3. Statistics from the 1841 Ireland Census are not available for comparison owing to their having been destroyed in the Fire at the Public Records Office in 1922 at the start of the Irish Civil War. ⏎

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4
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

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Introduced in piecemeal fashion, spread over decades, through legislation debated in parliament, the Chartists' demands – with the exception only of that for annual elections – were fulfilled and even exceeded. The People's Charter had been limited to achieving universal male suffrage. Not only had that been achieved, in 1918, but universal suffrage had also been accomplished through all women over the age of 21 having been granted the vote in 1928. Though there was universal suffrage from 1928, it was still not the case that there was one-person-one-vote. The reason for this was that plural voting continued.

Plural voting, the granting of more than one vote for university graduates in the specially set university constituencies and for business property owners where the property was in a different constituency than their residence, was retained in the Representation of the People Act, 1918. Plural voting was abolished in general elections to the British parliament, under the Representation of the People's Act, 1948, though it remained in local elections until 1969. In Northern Ireland, however, not only did plural voting remain in local elections after 1948 it also remained in elections to the Parliament of Northern Ireland for a further 20 years until, finally, it was abolished under the Electoral Law of 1968, which took effect in 1969.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, where business owners and those eligible for voting in the university constituencies were more likely to be Protestants than Catholics, plural voting gave advantages to the Protestant community over the Catholic community. Furthermore, in local elections, unlike in the rest of the UK, voting in Northern Ireland remained limited to ratepayers, namely to house owners and primary tenants and their spouses. Crucially, council tenants counted as ratepayers while those in privately rented accommodation did not and, adding to the inequities in voting rights, there was discrimination in favour of Protestants in the allocation of council housing. Adding further grievances, housing estates in Catholic areas were underfunded as, too, were Catholic Schools (see O'Leary and McGarry, 1993, pp. 120–121, 129, 308).

In addition to the advantages that Protestants had from plural voting in both the Northern Ireland Parliament and local elections, from the local election ratepayer requirement, in the allocation of council houses and in the funding allocation to housing estates and schools, there were also large disparities between Protestants and Catholics in employment. The male unemployment rate recorded in the 1971 Census of population was 17.3 percent for Catholics but 6.6 percent for non-Catholics. For females the figures were less striking but still present at 7.0 percent and 3.6 percent respectively. Furthermore, Protestant males also held most of the top managerial and professional jobs and also the scientific and technical jobs while Catholic males were disproportionately employed in low-paid occupations. For females the occupations held were more similar for Catholics and non-Catholics. (For the above see Rowthorn and Wayne, 1988, Tables 7.2 and 7.3.)

Not only were plural voting and additional suffrage restrictions in local government elections issues of consequence in Northern Ireland but the problems for Catholics were exacerbated by the structure of party politics being such that parties essentially aligned with religion. Northern Ireland had been formed from just six of the nine counties of Ulster, one of the four traditional provinces of Ireland: six counties rather than nine so to ensure that Protestants formed the majority. In consequence, one party, the Ulster Unionist Party, Uup, the party of Protestants, had an unassailable majority. And there had, therefore, been half a century of single party rule in the Parliament of Northern Ireland.

Added to the issues of plural voting, the structure of party politics such that one party, the Protestant party, was continuously in power in the Parliament of Northern Ireland and non-ratepayers being denied the vote in local elections, which disproportionately disadvantaged Catholic voters, there was gerrymandering of local council ward boundaries in some areas where Catholics were the majority, such that Protestants – even though the minority in those areas – formed the majority on local councils in some towns and cities. The most striking example was Derry/Londonderry where, even with the restrictions of voting rights, Catholic voters formed a very clear majority. However, in the 1967 local election 12 Unionist councillors but only eight non-Unionist councillors were elected and this with only 7,781 votes cast for the Uup as opposed to 14,429 votes cast for non-Unionist candidates. (For the above see O'Leary and McGarry, pp. 98–101, 111–14, 119–121.)

Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement

The lack of democracy in there not being one-person-one-vote, the social and economic inequities that were perpetuated in housing and jobs, and the inadequacies of the representation of the interests of the Catholic minority through plural voting, gerrymandering and one party – the Uup, the Protestant party – monopolizing power, led to the formation of groups seeking reforms within Northern Ireland. This represented a shift among Catholics in displacing the primary goal of a united Ireland, for which the Irish Republican Army, Ira, fought. The IRA was a volunteer force which had been established in 1919 from a force formed before the Easter Rising of 1916: the rising in support of an Irish Republic (O'Leary and McGarry, 1993, p. 161).

The first of the groups seeking reform within Northern Ireland was National Unity, which formed in 1959. From National Unity the National Democratic Party formed in 1965. In 1964, the Campaign for Social Justice, CSJ, was organized and, in the following year, it became affiliated with the (London-based) National Council for Civil Liberties (re-named Liberty in 1989). Frustrated by the pace of response to the campaign for reforms, a meeting was called in January 1967. The meeting was attended by all

political parties and from it the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, NICRA, emerged (O'Leary and McGarry, 1993, p. 160).

Like the National Democratic Party, NICRA, too, aligned with the aims of the British National Council for Civil Liberties to defend civil liberties and human rights. After the first meeting a statement of five objectives was handed out to the press. The objectives included 'to demand guarantees for freedom of speech, assembly and association' and made clear that the defence of freedoms was for 'all citizens' and the protection of rights for each individual. NICRA's constitution was formally introduced in April 1967 and, in emphasis of its objectives, the constitution stated that it was neither connected to any political party nor denominational (CAIN Civil Rights Campaign, no date).

NICRA's campaign had six main demands: to end plural voting so to have, as it stated, 'one man, one vote'; to end the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries; to end the discriminatory allocation of council housing; to end discrimination in public sector jobs (which extended into jobs in the shipbuilding and engineering industries); repeal of the Special Powers Act, first introduced in 1922 and made permanent in 1933, under which harsh penalties were applied mainly against Catholics; and the disbanding of the B-Specials. 'B-Specials' was a commonly used name for the Ulster Special Constabulary, which was an armed reserve force that had been set up, in 1920, during the Irish War of Independence. The B-Specials were greatly distrusted by Catholics. As described by O'Leary and McGarry (1993, p. 126), the B-Specials were 'nakedly sectarian, Protestant to a man.' (For the above see O'Leary and McGarry 1993, pp. 125–128.)

What was so new about NICRA was that not only was its campaign in line with the aims of the then British National Council for Civil Liberties but it also drew both inspiration and lessons on action from the United States civil rights movement during the years from 1954 to 1968.

US Civil Rights Movement

The US civil rights movement campaigned against racial disenfranchisement, racial segregation and racial discrimination of African Americans. The movement was first formed at the end of the American Civil War, 1861–1865, after slavery was abolished under the 13th

Amendment to the American Constitution, which was ratified in December 1865. The Amendment stated:

> The Thirteenth Amendment (1865)
>
> Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
>
> Section 2. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.
>
> *United States Constitution*

In some states in the South, however, Black Codes were introduced which denied equal rights to African Americans. These included the right to hold property, the right to use public facilities and the right to vote (Britannica, no date). Then, in 1865, in Pulaski, Tennessee, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) made its first appearance: a white-supremacist group, its purpose was to control African Americans through the use of terror tactics. The KKK held its first national convention in April 1867, in a hotel in Nashville (Cowan and Maguire, 1994, pp. 90–93).

It was also in 1865 that the civil rights movement first began. With the stated aims of ending racial discrimination against African Americans, enhancing their opportunities in education and employment and securing electoral significance, it adopted non-violent methods of protest.

In 1867 public education for African Americans was written into state constitutions and the vote was granted to African American males (Cowan and Maguire, 1994, p. 94). The same year the 14th and 15th Amendments to the US Constitution were passed and then ratified, respectively, in 1868 and 1870. The 14th granted citizenship and equal protection in law to all those who had been enslaved.

> Fourteenth Amendment (1868)
>
> All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the

United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

United States Constitution

The 15th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote to those who had been enslaved.

Fifteenth Amendment (1870)

The rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

United States Constitution

Over the years that followed the ratifications of the 14th and 15th Amendments, southern states devised ways to disenfranchise African Americans and, from 1881, passed 'Jim Crow' laws of racial segregation. In 1896, following a Supreme Court ruling in the case of Plessy v Ferguson, racial segregation was ruled constitutional. From that point, black and white Americans could not, for example, share a railway carriage, eat or drink at the same food counter or attend the same schools or universities. Beginning in 1890 through to 1908, southern states passed new laws and constitutions that disenfranchised most black voters and excluded them from being representatives.[1]

From 1896 through to 1954 the civil rights movement, most prominently the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), concentrated on political lobbying, publicity campaigns and legal challenges, many resting on the First Amendment to the American Constitution which states:

First Amendment (1791):

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of the speech, or of the press; or the right to people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

United States Constitution

The NAACP was formed in 1909 by activists, both black and white, with the stated mission to achieve equality of rights – economic, educational, political and social – of 'Black people and all persons of color' in a community 'where all persons can exercise their civil and human rights without discrimination' (NAACP, no date). In 1954 a major success was achieved when the case of Brown v Board of Education was brought and the Supreme Court's finding overruled that made in the Plessy v Ferguson case, which, in 1896, had ruled racial segregation constitutional.

Following the 1954 ruling the US civil rights movement took the turn that so influenced the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement, NICRA. From 1954 to 1968 the US civil rights movement continued to focus their campaign for equality in voting rights, in jobs and in housing and against racial segregation but adopted new methods of protest. Whereas the non-violent methods had previously concentrated on challenging legislation through the courts and other legal channels, the civil rights movement of 1954 to 1968 engaged in protest and civil disobedience that included boycotts, sit-ins and mass marches. The era also spawned further associations that widened the movement: the two most significant being the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SCLC, in 1957, which brought Dr Martin Luther King to the fore, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, SNCC, which brought supporting activists from the northern states to the southern states. Furthermore, and crucially, non-violent protests and civil disobedience could be even more effective in the new conditions of mass media technology.

The 1954 to 1968 civil rights campaigns for equality in voting rights, in jobs and in housing were issues also central to the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland. In the United States, however, rather than plural voting and gerrymandering being the political concerns of the campaign the focus was on the exclusion of black citizens from their voting rights. As explained, the vote that had been granted to black males at the end of the Civil War had been deliberately eroded in the southern states between 1890 through to 1908 and had been compounded by racial segregation being ruled constitutional in 1896.

As illustration of the consequences of the deliberate erosion of African American votes, as recorded in the US Supreme Court documents: in the State of Mississippi in 1890, black voters numbered 189,884 and white voters 118,870; in 1961, while the number of white voters had risen to

500,000, the number of black voters had fallen dramatically to 23,801. Broken down by county: in 1961, the registered black voters ranged from 0.028 percent of black voters eligible to vote (in Panola County) to 8.6 percent (in Washington County). For comparison, for white voters eligible to vote, the range for those registered was 96 percent (Marshall County) to 54.5 percent (Washington County). In Panola County only two black voters were registered and in two other counties the figure was also under ten. The case of the state of Mississippi is particularly notable because, in 1961, 52 percent of the adult population were African Americans and yet, in total, for all the counties, only 2.97 percent of African Americans had been permitted to register to vote. (For the above see Louis, 1997, pp. 327–329.)

The March on Washington

The first civil rights march took place in August 1963. Its planning brought together four groups of the civil rights movement – the SCLC, the SNCC, the Negro American Labour Council, NALC, and the Congress of Racial Equality, CORE – and then expanded through the inclusion of the NAACP and other groups. 'The March on Washington' – its full title 'The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom' – brought around a quarter of a million people to the Lincoln Memorial where Martin Luther King delivered his 'I Have a Dream' speech. It was a dream for freedom shared equally by everyone: irrespective of race, colour of skin or of religion.

The protest march had six goals: 'a comprehensive civil rights bill' such that civil rights laws would be interpreted fairly and equally and with a system for redressing failure to comply with constitutional rights; 'protection of the right to vote;' 'desegregation of all public schools in 1963;' a substantial federal works programme 'to train and place unemployed workers;' 'a Federal Fair Employment Practices Act barring discrimination in all employment;' and housing of acceptable standards (Martin Luther King, Jr Research and Education Institute, no date). The principal focus was the passage of the civil rights bill to address segregation.

President John F. Kennedy's administration had proposed the civil rights bill in response to the civil rights demonstration to end racial segregation that had taken place in Birmingham, Alabama, in the spring of 1963. The demonstration had been brutally attacked by the police. Birmingham,

Alabama had been chosen for staging the demonstration because it was among the most racially segregated cities in the USA, known both for having a very violent Ku Klux Klan and a notoriously brutal police force.

The demonstration had been organized to be peaceful and, as a show of peaceful intent, the decision had been made to place children at the front of the march; most were teenagers but ages ranged down to only eight or nine years old. Against the expectation of those who had supported the decision, the chief of police ordered fire hoses and police dogs to be set on the protesters and the arrests made included those of children. The events lasted for days and were witnessed by and highlighted through the media: television screens were the means of the most striking and widespread impact.

A further dramatic event was to follow. In September 1963, also in Birmingham, four children – African American girls – were killed when the KKK bombed a Baptist church. Again the media played a crucial role in bringing these events to the attention of the American population.

The Civil Rights Act was signed into law, in 1964, by President Lyndon B. Johnson, made president after Kennedy's assassination in November 1963. The Act made discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex or national origin illegal. It also prohibited the application of voter registration requirements from being applied unequally. In addition, the law banned racial segregation in schools and in public buildings and banned discrimination in employment. (See Paterson et al., 2001, pp. 143–147 for the above paragraphs.)

The March from Selma to Montgomery

In March 1965, a march, again in Alabama, was organized from Selma to Montgomery to establish the voting rights of African Americans by registration of their votes. The 1964 Civil Rights Act had set down that voter registration requirements were to be applied equally. However, in areas where the ideology of 'white supremacy' dominated, namely in the Southern US states, this requirement was contrived to continue the disenfranchisement of black voters. The principle devise used was that of literacy tests subjectively applied so to exclude African Americans, irrespective of their actual literacy. In Dallas County, in which Selma was situated, African Americans made up 57 percent of the population and yet

out of the 15,000 black adults only 335 were registered to vote. By comparison, 9,500 white adults were registered (Paterson et al., 2001, p. 148).

The plan for the Selma to Montgomery march was set in motion by the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson, an African American man killed by the police when trying to defend his mother from attack. The marchers, unarmed and numbering fewer than 600 people set off on 7 March 1965 and were viciously attacked by police. It was an event that, like the events in Russia in January 1905, was to become known as 'Bloody Sunday.' The journalist George B. Leonard captured the media impact in his article written at the time for *The Nation*:

> There are moments during this process [of awakening a nation's conscience] when the senses of an entire nation becomes suddenly sharper, when pain pours in and the resulting outrage turns to action. One of these moments came, not on Sunday, March, 7, when a group of Negroes at Selma were gassed, clubbed and trampled by horses, but on the following day when films of the event appeared on national television.
>
> *George B. Leonard (Carson et al., 1991, p. 213)*

The Selma to Montgomery march re-grouped and, grown to 1,500, set off two days later but turned back after three white civil rights activists were attacked at night, by a gang of white men, leaving one, Reverend James Reeb, to die. The march, now at its third re-grouping, was joined by Martin Luther King and when, 12 days later and now expanded to 8,000, the march set off it did so under protection organized by President Johnson. With thousands more joining in and 10 miles covered each day, 30,000 civil rights marchers entered Montgomery on 25 March 1965. (See Piven and Cloward, 1979, pp. 250–251.)

President Johnson's response took the form not only of protection for the marchers but also the decision to introduce a voting rights bill. The Voting Rights Act became law on 6 August 1965 and its protections were then expanded further on five separate occasions. The Act was designed to strengthen the 14th and 15th Amendments to the US Constitution, which had been adopted, in 1868 and 1870 respectively, at the end of the Civil War. As explained, the 14th Amendment granted citizenship and equal

protection in law to all those who had been enslaved, slavery having been abolished in the 13th Amendment of 1865; the 15th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote to those who had been enslaved.

Though the 15th Amendment had prohibited the denial of the vote on account of 'race, color, or previous condition of servitude,' what had not been listed was sex and so, in line with the suffrage practice in 1865, the vote had been given only to males. A century later, President Johnson's 1965 Voting Rights Act prohibited the imposition of any voting law that would result in the denial or reduction of the right of any citizen to vote on account of their race or colour or having a minority language. In line with universal suffrage, the current practice in 1965, the voting right applied to all women as well as to all men. Furthermore, in recognition of the practices that had been used to deny African Americans their vote, the Act also purposely gave mention to the prohibition of practices such as literacy tests.

In response to the outbreak of riots in more than 100 US cities in 1967 over discrimination faced by African Americans in jobs and housing, President Johnson set up a commission, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, to inquire into the causes of the riots. The Commission's final report called for major reforms in employment and public policy. It resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1968 which prohibited discrimination in housing based on race, religion or national origin and also made threatened or actual attacks motivated by race, skin colour, religion or national origin a federal crime.

Civil Rights Marches in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement, NICRA, too, had initially embarked on a peaceful campaign, which involved petitioning and lobbying, but finding it produced little effect changed to tactics adopted by the US civil rights movement of 1954 to 1968. NICRA was inspired both by the US civil rights marches and the movement's legislative successes. The first civil rights march organized by the Northern Ireland civil rights movement was from Coalisland to Dungannon; it took place in August 1968. Though peaceful the march was stopped by police and prevented from entering Dungannon (CAIN Civil Rights Campaign, no date). As in the case both of the US civil rights March on Washington and the March

from Selma to Montgomery, scenes of the events were televised and conveyed worldwide (O'Leary and McGarry, 1993, p. 169).

The second civil rights march took place in October 1968. It was organized from Waterside, on the east side of Derry/Londonderry, to the centre of the city. Waterside was the Protestant/Unionist area of the, otherwise, predominantly Catholic city. Though banned by the Minister for Home Affairs, the march went ahead. The police, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), broke up the march, baton-charging into the crowd, leaving many injured. Three days of rioting resulted, with a battle breaking out between the police and local residents, principally the local youths, in the Bogside, a majority Catholic/Republican area of the city.

In January 1969, emulating the US civil rights movement's march through Alabama from Selma to Montgomery, a 'Long March' was organized from Belfast to Derry/Londonderry. The idea for the march came from the Derry Housing Action Committee, an organization that campaigned against both the shortage of council housing and the discrimination against Catholics in the allocation of council housing. Nearing its end, as it moved close to Derry, the march was attacked both by 'loyalists,' that is those 'loyal' to the union with Britain, together with members of the RUC. The attack led to barricades being set up in the Bogside. On 12 August, the situation escalated into what became known as the 'Battle of the Bogside,' a confrontation between the RUC and the people of Bogside, in which not just stones but petrol bombs were thrown. The battle lasted for three days. The B-Specials were called in to take over from the RUC. The RUC and loyalist paramilitaries then attacked Catholic areas in west Belfast, where barricades were set up and, as in Derry/Londonderry, a 'free' area was declared. These events, too, were filmed and given television coverage worldwide. (For the above account see CAIN Civil Rights Campaign, no date.)

With the August 1969 riots threatening to break out into civil war the British Army was sent in to keep the peace. At first welcomed, the effectiveness of peacekeeping deteriorated; political violence escalated with the opposed forces of loyalist paramilitaries and the Irish Republican Army, Ira, increasingly becoming involved. From a peaceful civil rights movement with the aim of ending political, economic and social discrimination against Catholics, the situation became turned into a nationalist fight between those supporting the union of Britain and Northern Ireland, and those wanting to

join the Irish Republic in a united Ireland: the fight, that is, between loyalists/Unionists and nationalists/Republicans.

As both the Ira and loyalist paramilitaries became more and more involved, bombs began exploding in the streets with each side blaming the other. In early 1971, the Provisional Republican Army, PIRA, broke from the IRA, to embark on a terrorist campaign (O'Kane, 2012, pp. 71–73). Loyalist militias retaliated. In the deteriorating conditions of the British Army's capacity to act as peacekeepers, in January 1972, like those so named in the United States in 1965 and Russia in 1905, Northern Ireland had its own 'Bloody Sunday' when, on 30 January, British Army soldiers opened fire on a peaceful unarmed civil rights demonstration, killing 14 civilians.

The End of the Civil Rights Era in Northern Ireland

With the escalation of violence the era of the civil rights movement had come to its end. Rather than being directed towards democracy in a non-violent and non-sectarian campaign the fight had developed into one between loyalists/Unionists, who wanted to stay part of the United Kingdom, and nationalists/Republicans, who wanted to break with the UK and become part of the Republic of Ireland. And yet, much like the US civil rights movement, the Northern Ireland civil rights movement had had political successes. The campaign had succeeded in ending plural voting by 1969. In 1970, the movement had achieved the abolition of the B-Specials. And, in 1973, the Special Power Act was also ended.

Rather than the achievement of peaceful democracy, the fight between Republican and Unionist forces carried on for nigh on 30 years and, like the events in Ireland from 1920 to 1922, the conflict again became known as 'the Troubles.' The Troubles took the form not simply of violent confrontation but also of terrorism and during those three decades a total of 3,500 people were killed. Over those years many attempts to bring resolution were made but failed. The era of the Troubles was eventually brought to an end by the Good Friday Agreement, which was signed by both sides in 1998.

Conclusion

Four conclusions for democracy can be drawn from consideration and comparison of the US and Northern Ireland civil rights movements.

The first, and the most obvious, is that devices such as plural voting, property qualifications and literacy tests contravene the necessary features of representative democracy of universal suffrage and votes counting equally.

The second is that while civil rights protests can achieve legislation demanded for representative democracy, civil rights movements do not necessarily bring peaceful democracy.

The third is that control of the police and the army by government with citizen's consent is essential for the operation of representative democracy and those state coercive forces must have the capability of keeping the peace by operating not through uncontrolled violence but through law.

The fourth conclusion speaks to what a representative democracy is not. A representative democracy is not a political system where issues are settled by violence and neither is it a system used to privilege one group over another.

Note

1. For fuller factual details see, for example, Paterson et al. (2001). See also sections on 'Politics and Civil Rights' in Cowan and Maguire (1994, pp. 116–141) where not only court cases and state constitutional changes are recorded including for each year 1890 to 1908, but so too are the annual numbers of recorded lynchings. The first lynchings of African Americans recorded are 48 in 1882 and the highest figure, 160, occurred in 1892 (Cowan and Maguire, 1994, p. 119). Having kept records of such lynchings for 71 years it was not until 1952 that the Tuskegee Institute reported the first year in which no known lynching of an African American had occurred (Cowan and Maguire, 1994, p. 219). ⏎

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5
AFTER THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

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The civil rights movements in the United States and in Northern Ireland were similar in respect both of the adoption of non-violent action campaigns and in the achievement of changes in legislation that included the securing of one-person-one-vote, but the two cases were markedly different in respect of the events that followed.

The End of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement

In Northern Ireland, the ‘long march’ from Belfast to Derry/Londonderry, in 1969, organized by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement, NICRA, and intended to be peaceful, led to confrontation with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, barricades being set up and escalation into what became known as the ‘Battle of the Bogside’ with petrol bombs being thrown. The battle, which then also involved the B-Specials, lasted for three days. The RUC and loyalist paramilitaries then attacked Catholic areas in west Belfast, where barricades were also set up and a ‘free’ area declared. The British Army was sent in to keep the peace but the situation soon deteriorated. With the opposed forces of loyalist paramilitaries and the Irish Republican Army, IRA, increasingly becoming involved, the situation

turned from a non-violent campaign for equal civil and political rights for Catholics and Protestants within a representative democracy into a nationalist fight with bombs exploding in the streets (CAIN, no date.) And worse was to come.

Breaking from the Ira, in 1971, the Provisional Republican Army, PIRA, embarked on a terrorist campaign and loyalist militias retaliated (O'Kane, 2012, pp. 71–73). In January 1972, Northern Ireland, like those so named in the United States in 1965 and Russia in 1905, had its own 'Bloody Sunday' when, as explained, 14 civilians were killed by British Army soldiers when they opened fire on a peaceful unarmed civil rights demonstration. The conflict between loyalists/Unionists, who wanted to stay part of the United Kingdom, and nationalists/Republicans, who wanted to break with the UK and become part of the Republic of Ireland, lasted for nearly three decades. 'The Troubles,' as it became known, which took the form of violent battles and terrorism, led to 3,500 people being killed. Over those decades many attempts to bring resolution were made but failed: the Troubles were eventually brought to an end by the Good Friday Agreement, in 1998.

The outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, its lasting for nearly three decades, the involvement of terrorism and its leading to so high a toll of people killed had no equivalent in the United States. This was so even though racial prejudice and violence and police brutality against African Americans continued and a movement developed in rejection of the non-violent methods of the civil rights campaign.

The US Civil Rights Movement Onwards

The Black Panther Party, Bpp, which was formed in October 1966, rejected non-violent methods of achieving civil rights for African Americans and, for the purpose of self-defence, adopted the policy of being armed with the choice of weapons to be within the law. Along with the aims of freedom and of fairness, equality and justice in employment, housing, education and the law, point 7 of the BPP programme demanded 'we want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people' (see Carson et al., 1991, p. 346). In 1967, the Black Panther Party took a further step to argue that the United States should be divided into separate homelands, one

for black people the other for white people. Though initially drawing support and becoming a movement, the BPP was essentially ended by 1980. The movement lost support through the violence of the Black Panther campaign and the limiting appeal for the idea of two homelands. The violence together with revolutionary slogans even though accompanied by practical actions to help poor African Americans also led to the BPP becoming a target of the FBI and, so, to its defeat.

The demise of the Bpp in 1980 did not bring an end to police brutality directed at African Americans. In the continuing situation of police violence, though sometimes leading to spontaneous riots, the campaigns against police violence employed non-violent methods of protest, such as marches, rallies and demonstrations. Furthermore, the most enduring subsequent movement in opposition to police brutality against African Americans continued in the tradition of non-violence as the method of its campaign.

After 1980

In January 1987 around 75 marchers gathered in Georgia in honour of Martin Luther King Jr Day. They were pelted with mud and rocks and cans and bottles by around 400 members and supporters of the Ku Klux Klan. A week later, in protest, another march was organized in Georgia which drew 20,000 civil rights demonstrators from across America. Those marching at its head included the president of the SCLC, the executive director of the NAACP and Coretta Scott King, Martin Luther's King's widow (Treadwell and Bearak, 1987).

In 1992, riots broke out in Los Angeles in spontaneous reaction to the acquittal of the police officers who had severely beaten Rodney King, an African American. The beating had been videoed and the video had then been spread through the media, nationwide. The riots lasted for five days but, unlike in Northern Ireland where rioting similarly leading to loss of life and large numbers of injuries formed the background to the Troubles, the riots in Los Angeles were contained (see History.com, no date-a). Furthermore, later similar such events involving brutal behaviour against African Americans captured on film and followed by acquittals of the

perpetrators also produced an outcome in striking contrast to the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

In 2013, a man charged with the murder of Trayvon Martin, an African American teenager, was acquitted. The killing of Trayvon Martin, too, had been recorded on camera. The acquittal of the perpetrator led not to localized violent reaction but to marches and protests held across the US and a petition signed by over two million people. The event sparked the beginning of the Black Lives Matter slogan (History.com, no date-b). In 2014, there were two further high-profile attacks on African Americans, and the Black Lives Matter slogan developed into a nationwide movement.

In August 2014, the fatal shooting of Michael Brown Jr by a white policeman led to widespread massive protests in November after the acquittal of the policeman, in spite of the videoed evidence that was strikingly contrary to the policeman's account of events. A month earlier, the video of the death of Eric Garner through being held in a chokehold by a New York policeman, too, had spread through the media and, in December 2014, 50 demonstrations were held across the United States in protest at the decision not to indict the policeman. (See History.com, no date-c; History.com, no date-d.)

The Black Lives Matter movement campaigned against racism and violence against African Americans, especially by the police, and centred on reform of the criminal justice system. In line with the earlier civil rights movement, Black Lives Matter was committed to non-violence. The murder of George Floyd, in May 2020, by a police officer in Minneapolis, too, was captured on camera. The video quickly transmitted around the world and led to the Black Lives Matter movement becoming not just nationwide but worldwide. (See History.com, no date-e.)

Comparative Lessons

Comparison of the similarities and differences between the events that came after the US and the Northern Ireland civil rights movements suggests lessons for democracy in respect of sources of threat to its stability and, therefore, possible conditions conducive to the sustenance and development of representative democracy.

Minority and Majority Groups

One similarity between the US and the Northern Ireland civil rights movements points to the process of democracy being put in danger by a majority group being in power over a minority group: in the United States, by white-Americans over African-Americans; in Northern Ireland by Protestants/unionists over Catholics/nationalists. In each case, the observation draws attention to the country's history: in the United States, the history of slavery; in Northern Ireland, its creation from six of the nine counties of Ulster, the six counties having been chosen so to ensure a dominant Protestant majority and the party of that dominant majority, the Ulster Unionist Party, Uup, not only the party of government but also in power for a very long time.

The cases of the United States and Northern Ireland also draw attention to the possible relevance of the size of the minority relative to the majority in each case and also to size changes. In Northern Ireland, Catholics were a large minority in relation to Protestants whereas in the United States African Americans formed a significantly smaller minority group. In Northern Ireland, in 1921, Catholics constituted 34.45 percent of the population. In comparison, Protestants (Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Church of Ireland and Methodists added together) formed 61.4 percent of the population. By 1970 the figures had not changed greatly, with Catholics approximately 32 percent and Protestants approximately 54 percent. By 2021, however, the percentage of people identifying themselves as Catholics had increased to 42.3 percent and this had overtaken that of Protestants, at 30.5 percent. Furthermore, the number of those entering 'none' or not stating their religion had risen from 0 percent in 1921 to 18 percent in 2021. (For the above statistics see NISRA Census 2021, no date.) Though still a minority of the population, Catholics by 2021 constituted the largest religious group in Northern Ireland.

As a minority, the case of African Americans in the United States was very different from that of Catholics in Northern Ireland: the percentage of the population identifying as African Americans was both significantly smaller and changed little. In 1950, African Americans, those self-identifying as black formed 10 percent of the population and 10.5 percent in 1960 (United States Census Bureau, no date). The figure had risen only to 12.6 percent by 2022 (USAfacts, no date).

With Protestants constituting the majority of the population, the Uup was the party of government in Northern Ireland for over 50 years: from its founding, in 1921, through to 1972. In the United States, however, both the Democratic and Republican parties drew on African American support, with the level of African American support for each party being largely affected by the legislation beneficial to African Americans previously enacted when the party was in government. So, the Republican Party drew long-term benefit in their support after the Republican Abraham Lincoln's presidency, under which slavery was ended, and the Democratic Party after the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson Democratic Party presidencies, under which the anti-race discrimination legislation was drawn up and enacted.

Parties and Cleavages

Consideration of minority and majority groups in society draws attention to whether political parties gain support essentially from only one social group or from plural social groups. There is a crucial difference between plural groups that provide the opportunity for participation together with experience of the value of compromise through the learning of others' interests, opinions and values as opposed to plural groups that, in being exclusionary and so not providing such opportunities for interaction, keep society divided. The difference between groups – political parties, voluntary associations, trade unions, economic organizations and the like – of these two sorts has been theorised in terms of social cleavages. The kinds of social cleavages that involve groups of the former kind are referred to as 'cross-cutting' and those that involve the latter kind as 'reinforcing' (Lijphart, 1968; Rae and Taylor, 1970).

Taking religious cleavage as an example, a society divided by religion where the political parties are each based on a different religion and attract votes only from citizens of that religion and membership of social groups and businesses that, likewise, are based around those single religions, would be one where social and political cleavages would be reinforcing. Northern Ireland after 1922 was a case in point. In contrast, a society with cross-cutting cleavages would be one where political parties attracted members and supporters from different religions and where social and business groups also had no basis in one religion and, so, drew members and

participants from various religions and those without religion, too. In general, a society with cross-cutting cleavages would be one where citizens had experience of cooperation and opportunity, therefore, to experience and gain willingness to seek compromise – and not just within government but within society more generally.

This potential for cross-cutting cleavages to engender cooperation and compromise requires, therefore, a society not simply with plural groups but one in which cleavages are not intense: worst of all would be a society that is riven by one major intense cleavage and divided into two opposing factions of reinforcing plural groups.

In the United States, the Southern States most surely, race was an intense cleavage at the time of the civil rights movement. In Northern Ireland, the Troubles highlighted the intensity of cleavage between Protestants and Catholics. That the percentage of Catholics was significantly higher in Northern Ireland than the percentage of African Americans in the United States may, therefore, help to explain the differences between the nature, levels and duration of violence in the two cases after their civil rights eras. This is not, however, the only difference between the cases.

Electoral Systems

The possibilities of political parties playing a role in inculcating willingness in society to engage in cooperation and compromise and, so, in mollifying the intensity of differences relates not only to the nature of the political parties themselves and their role in reinforcing as opposed to cross-cutting cleavages. It also relates to the kinds of electoral systems in which the parties operate. Furthermore, those electoral systems, in turn, affect the forms of government produced.

At the times of their civil rights movements both Northern Ireland, from 1929 to 1972, and the United States, through to the present, had first-past-the-post (single-member plurality) electoral systems. Electoral systems, that is, where voters, within a constituency, each cast a single vote, choosing just one out of a number of candidates, from competing political parties, and where the one winning the top score of votes is chosen as the representative. That is to say, the top-score candidate wins the seat. Because in the first-past-the post system the top score of votes received by a candidate will not need to exceed 50 percent of the total votes cast, and is

unlikely to do so other than in a strictly two-party competition, the candidate elected will not necessarily have an absolute majority.

Under the first-past-the-post system, the number of seats in parliament determines the formation of the government and, in consequence, single party government was both able to be and, indeed, was the outcome of each of the elections held in both Northern Ireland and the United States. In contrast to the case of Northern Ireland, where the same party, the Uup, won every election, in the US – where neither the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party monopolized the majority social group's support or that of the minority group – political parties competed for votes at each election such that the party of government changed.

In Northern Ireland, the UUP's five decades of being elected into government was finally ended, in March 1972, when, against the backdrop of society's descent into violence, the UK government suspended the devolved parliament. Formally abolished in 1973, the Parliament of Northern Ireland was replaced by a new legislature, the Northern Ireland Assembly, with its members elected not by the first-past-the post system but by a system of proportional representation. The outcome of the June 1973 election for the newly created Northern Ireland Assembly was that the Uup, while still having the largest number of seats, no longer held a majority of seats and so the executive of the devolved government was formed by the UUP sharing power with two other parties: the Social Democratic Labour Party, SDLP, and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, APNI, more usually and simply called the Alliance Party.

The SDLP was a social democratic and Irish nationalist party, whereas the Alliance Party was expressly pro-unionist but also non-sectarian, its aim being to bring the Catholic and Protestant communities together. Both parties had formed in 1970. In September 1971, however, another new party, the Democratic Unionist Party, Dup, was also founded. Strongly connected to the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster and led by its founder, Reverend Ian Paisley, the DUP was not simply another unionist party; it was strongly opposed to power-sharing.

Power-sharing was the cornerstone of attempts to end the Troubles and bring peace to Northern Ireland. The new power-sharing government, which took office in January 1974, lasted less than five months. It collapsed in May of that year after the Ulster Worker's Council strike, a general strike of unionists opposed to sharing power with Irish nationalists, in which

loyalist paramilitaries were involved and in which the Dup played a very vocal part (see CAIN, no date). Further attempts at a political solution involving power-sharing were tried: a Constitutional Convention in 1975 and All-Party Talks in 1979–1980. Peace through consultation with Southern Ireland was then tried: the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985; and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 which, following a majority vote of 71.1 percent in a referendum, finally brought the Troubles to an end (Hume, 1997; Irish Central, no date).

The collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1974 after just five months provides an illustration of proportional representation not necessarily offering a solution for stable government. It, along with the other attempts, illustrates that the possibility of coalition governments requires both the willingness of political parties to share power and the willingness of the electorate to accept governments formed of party coalitions. This together with the breakdown of stability under the first-past-the-post system in Northern Ireland highlights that democracy in practice is unlikely to be able to be portrayed simply in terms of a common set of identical institutions. Representative democracy may require one-person-one-vote but not political institutions of one-shape-to-fit-all. The case of Northern Ireland has also suggested not only the unlikelihood of democracy being able to be portrayed in terms of political institutions to-fit-all but also that they could not be for-all-time.

Social Cleavages

As consideration of Northern Ireland has shown, the cleavages in society need to be recognized and the political institutions and processes appropriately chosen and shaped so to achieve a willingness for cooperation and an acceptance of compromise if peaceful and stable democratic government is to be achieved and sustained. The case has also illustrated that political parties that serve to reinforce those cleavages add to the problem of achieving the goal of stable democracy. The case has further indicated that in achieving the goal of a stable representative democratic system of government, some social cleavages may prove particularly problematic.

The cases both of the United States and of Northern Ireland have highlighted the problems presented by intense cleavages based on race, religion and nationality. In the Northern Ireland example of nationality, the case was of one group being aligned with the UK and the other with the Republic of Ireland. Discrimination involving characteristics or behaviours that cannot be changed such as race, religion, nationality and also sex, sexuality and disability is inherently antipathetic to representative democracy: a political system in which all citizens must count equally. As Gregor (1982, p. 162) argues, in the context of differentiation between terror and intimidation, 'Since racial traits are ascriptive, there is nothing in principal that an individual can actively do to avoid social and political sanction once such traits are used to identify those subject to differential treatment.'

The intensity of cleavages and, therefore, the threat posed to the achievement of a stable democratic process will not, however, simply depend on the nature of the social cleavage itself but will be affected by the nature of the society in which the cleavage exists. There will, for example, be little opportunity to learn of other opinions if opposed groups live in separate areas, the children attend separate schools, the adults go to work at separate places of employment and belong to separate voluntary associations – sports clubs, sewing groups, book clubs and the like – and are members of separate parties.

Though the nature of the cleavage may play a part in the separation between groups – for example, Catholic children are expected to attend Catholic schools – it may also or, perhaps, rather reflect the nature of government and the restrictions of society: the existence of racial segregation laws or inequalities effected by religious differences, for example. For democracy to flourish the advantages afforded by a more socially and economically equal society follows. In line with lessons drawn from the cases of the Chartist Petitions, consideration of both the US and Northern Ireland civil rights movements have shown – in their campaigns against discrimination in employment, housing, education and treatment by the police and judiciary – that democracy is more likely to be found flourishing where rules are applied by the police, the judiciary and by bureaucrats objectively and not only not subjectively but, in reflection on the negative lesson drawn from the Russian petition case, also not arbitrarily.

Conclusion

Many lessons follow from consideration of the US and Northern Ireland civil rights cases.

The first, as so clearly illustrated by the US case, is that racist laws and racist societies are antipathetic to representative democracy: a political system in which all citizens must count equally. The same, furthermore, applies to any such discrimination involving characteristics or behaviours that cannot be changed, such as religion, as illustrated by the case of Northern Ireland, and also sex, sexuality, disability and nationality.

The second lesson drawn is that in representative democracies political parties that are elected into power as the single party of government should be ones that attract votes from multiple interests and, so, multiple interest groups in society. Nevertheless, governments formed from coalitions of parties may provide a way to accommodate parties representing the interests of a single group but only if such parties are willing to join, that is to share power, in coalition governments. The importance of willingness to share power was very clearly illustrated by the case of the UUP and its unwillingness to do so.

A third lesson is one that simply deserves to be restated: representative democracy must have changes of parties in government though not necessarily at every election.

The fourth lesson is that in representative democracies the interests of minorities and not only those of the majority must be represented and their interests taken into account in decision-making. In consequence, cooperation and compromise are essential to representative democracy.

The fifth lesson, which draws most heavily on the case of the United States, concerns not only the general importance of the media to representative democracy as a source of information but also highlights the importance of the mass media of communication being independently open to citizens and without bias.

The sixth lesson, which draws heavily on the case of Northern Ireland, is that a cleavage in which one group wishes to be governed by a government of another country is likely to be the intense cleavage most difficult to resolve.

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6
REFERENDUM

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Demands for representation of interests were again being made more than five decades after the civil rights movements in the United States and Northern Ireland and more than a century after the Russian and Chartist petitions. This time it was in the country where, so long ago, the Chartists had first petitioned for representation of interests; the country, that is, that shortly before the start of the First World War Saki's Moung Ka had objected to its being called a democracy: the country now known as the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland. Not all of the people of the United Kingdom, however, were of the same mind. They neither all had the same interests nor all the same opinions. It was only some of the people who were expressing concerns about undemocratic rule. The issue that stirred such criticism from those some was the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union and because it was a for-or-against issue and related to the question of which government governs, the cleavage over membership easily became intense.[1]

Lessons in the EU Debate Relating to Democracy

Bureaucracy

A central argument made by those opposed to membership of the European Union was one that was so prominently made in the Russian petition in

1905. In the case of the UK the objection to bureaucratic rule was that bureaucrats – the so-called 'bureaucrats in Brussels' – could neither know the interests of UK citizens nor properly represent them; only the British themselves could truly know their own interests and only democratically elected representatives, not bureaucrats, could serve those interests. If those interests were to be served, the avenues for the representation of UK interests had to be open and not conducted 'behind closed doors,' and that was why decisions had to be made through properly elected representatives.

1. *Bureaucracy as servant*. Bureaucracy must serve democracy and not replace it. The role of bureaucracy is to keep avenues open for ascertaining, representing and providing for citizens' interests. Bureaucracy must not hinder democracy through acting as a barrier to the understanding of those interests or work actively against them and towards other interests.

The issue of sovereignty followed from this thinking about the EU's bureaucratic failure to properly represent interests. While Britain might be a member of the European Union, the other members of the EU had interests that were not all the same as those of Britain and Northern Ireland and it was thus that sovereignty became entwined with the meaning of democracy itself.

Sovereignty

Sovereignty as the authority of a country to govern itself without outside (in this instance, the European Union's) interference – 'national sovereignty' – became, in public debate, one-and-the-same as 'popular sovereignty,' the idea that power belongs to the people and therefore governments must abide by 'the general will.' The notion of the general will, an idea difficult to pin down in practice, became merged with the concept of majority opinion, such as could be expressed in opinion polls or outcomes of elections, and, in some views, the general will referred to the general public: ordinary people, not those privileged by position or education or both – the privileged sometimes referred to as 'the elite.' In the context of the United Kingdom, the idea of national sovereignty also became mixed up with the concerns of the devolved nations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

and, so, of England. Thus ‘sovereignty,’ as a term, took on both considerable importance and notable plasticity.

2. *Sovereignty*. The interests to be served by democracy are those of the citizens of the country in question and they are to be served by the government of their choosing.

Cooperation and Compromise

Not all of the people of the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland, however, were of the same opinion on EU membership. The counter-position to the anti-EU line of argument about sovereignty, in whichever guise, ran along the lines that not all of UK interests were exclusive to the UK and that some interests, mutual ones most clearly, were best served through cooperation with other countries and, thus, through continued membership of the European Union. Arguments about the idea of sovereignty being out-of-date in a globalized world were also made by those wanting to remain within the European Union. Though rarely actually featured in the debate, the importance of bureaucracy as an essential means for the process of cooperation between countries, and, so, for the process of democracy, followed.

Sometimes, the argument was also raised that it was not necessarily the case that one country should always put its own interests first: that ‘stronger’ countries might have a duty, under some conditions and in some situations, to assist ‘weaker’ countries. In this context the example of NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was often cited. In these lines of argument, co-operating with others, sometimes putting others’ interests before or along with one’s own and reaching compromise, therefore featured as part of what a democracy should look like: cooperation and compromise being a necessary part of the idea of democracy.

3. *Cooperation and compromise*. Cooperating with others, which may include sometimes putting the interests of others before one’s own, is necessary for democracy to operate in practice.

   This may apply not only within a country but also when dealing with others outside one’s country.

Lessons for Democracy from the Holding of the Referendum

Democracy and its meaning took centre stage both in the decision to hold a referendum and in the interpretation of its result. In the light of persistent anti-EU sentiments from a variety of groups and media sources, the 'democratic' action was decided to be to put membership of the European Union to a vote. Such had, of course, already occurred in as far as votes had taken place in elections for political parties with EU-membership, for or against, in their manifestos. But the idea gained ground that it was necessary to settle the question once-and-for-all by having a vote on that question alone: the holding of a referendum so viewed as democracy in action: true democracy as direct democracy.

Minority Interests

As direct democracy in action, the holding of a referendum raised issues of democracy not only as an ideal – direct versus indirect, ancient versus modern – but also in working practice. It was obvious that there would be no circumstances where everyone would vote and where everyone would vote the same way. There would never be a 'general will' in the sense of a unanimous agreement being reached, one way or another. It followed that the worst of outcomes would be the one that produced the most indecisive outcome: a split in the vote close to 50:50; a voter turnout at a level which meant that less than 50 percent of the electorate had voted for the winning side; and where any of the devolved nations (Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales) would vote out-of-line with the overall result.

This worst of outcomes was exactly what happened in the EU referendum of 2016. Voting in an election and the 'majority' deciding the winner, so often taken to be what 'democratic' means, was, under this interpretation, democratic for England and Wales – with the majority of votes for leaving the European Union at 53.4 percent and 52.5 percent respectively – but not 'democratic' for Northern Ireland and Scotland – with the majority of votes to remain in the EU at 55.8 percent and 62.0 percent respectively. Once withdrawal from the EU was decided, both

Northern Ireland and Scotland felt, therefore, that their interests had been ignored.

In the light of the narrowness of the overall outcome of the referendum – 51.89 percent in favour of leaving the EU as opposed to 48.11 percent in favour of remaining in the EU – a very large number of people in England and Wales who had voted to remain in the EU were also left feeling aggrieved. In the Greater London region, one of the 12 regions into which the UK was divided for the purpose of EU elections and therefore for the referendum, 59.93 percent had voted to remain in the European Union. A further issue was that turnout in the 12 regions ranged between 76.8 percent and 62.7 percent of eligible voters. Furthermore, the overall turnout averaging 71.4 percent meant that less than half of those eligible to vote had actually voted to leave the European Union. The percentage of those eligible to vote who had voted to leave the EU worked out at 37.5 percent. (For statistics on the results of the EU Referendum see Electoral Commission, no date.)

4. *Minority interests*. In a complex society democracy must take account of minority interests as, for example, where there is devolved government and where interests differ between nationalities. The same is true wherever and whenever there are differences of interests; such differences are more likely to be found the more complex the society is.

   'Wills of the people' is more fitting for representative democracy than 'will of the people' as the latter implies consensus while the former recognizes differences of views and interests.

Majority

With only 37.5 percent of those eligible to vote actually having voted to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum the notion of majority could clearly be questioned and it was questioned by the devolved governments and by the majorities that had voted to remain in the EU in Scotland and Northern Ireland and also by the minorities in England and Wales who had voted to remain in the European Union. In contrast, among those who had been in favour of leaving the European Union, the result – that a majority had voted to leave the EU – was not simply accepted but

quickly translated into its being the ‘the will of the people’ or ‘the general will,’ and, for those who were in favour of leaving the EU the importance of the people’s will became held up as central to the meaning of democracy.

5. *Majority*. The interpretation of ‘majority’ is not always straightforward. Conflicting interpretations of ‘majority’ can occur in complex societies especially when voter turnout varies such as from area to area or group to group.

   The ‘will of the people’ and ‘the majority’ cannot simply be interpreted as the same and the terms employed interchangeably.

Voting

Focusing attention on turnout at elections, including regional variations, and the problem of interpreting results raises the issue of elections serving the interests not of the whole community but only of those who have actually cast their vote; those interested enough to vote, perhaps. This highlights that though casting votes is essential to representative democracy, elections are not synonymous with democracy. This is so not only because not all citizens use their vote, which may have the effect of excluding some interests from consideration, but also because voting itself does not offer a guarantee that choice between alternative policies is involved.

6. *Voting*. Voting, whether in elections or referendums, is necessary for but not synonymous with representative democracy because it neither ensures that all interests are taken into account nor that voters are offered choice between alternative policies. This also applies to elections.

The Conduct of Referendums and Elections

The 2016 referendum brought further criticisms: criticisms in respect of the way it was conducted; criticisms that might be made more generally about elections.

Election Time

One such criticism was that the time between the declaration of the referendum and its being held may have been too short for proper debate to be had and for the claims made in the outpouring of information from these sources to be scrutinized properly. Such an argument can also be applied to elections, both general and local.

7. *Election time*. The time between the declaration of a referendum and its being held must be long enough for proper debate to be had and for the claims made in the outpourings of all the relevant institutions and groups to be properly scrutinized. This also applies to elections.

Information

Another criticism of the conduct of the referendum was that the information provided to the electorate may have been inadequate and not just in sufficiency of content or quantity but also in that it may have been misleading or, worse, that it contained some deliberate untruths or half-truths. Such accusations were levelled at the government, the Opposition, parliament, civil servants, political parties and the media. Accusations of bias were also made about various branches of the media: for example, the BBC and newspapers such as *The Daily Mail*. Accusations about the misleading nature of information provided were also levelled at the groups in society that existed or emerged to champion the pro or anti case.

8. *Nature of information*. The information provided by government, the Opposition, members of parliament, civil servants, political parties, the media and participating groups must be adequate for proper debate, must not be misleading and must not contain deliberate untruths or half-truths. Democracies neither produce nor rely on propaganda, from any source.

Logical Requirements for the Ideal Practice

The claims about the inadequacy of information and insufficiency of time for its absorption and discussion highlights further features logically required of representative democracy in ideal practice. It follows from there needing to be information for the fuelling of proper, informed debate and that such debate would require that the information should come from multiple sources; that there should be multiple groups, on each side, being allowed to exist or to newly form and that properly sourced knowledge should be employed to support the position taken by those groups. Underlying such arguments about the quality of the information logically necessary for a referendum held in a healthy, fully functioning democracy are further requirements: ones made explicit in both the Chartist and the 1905 Russian petitions.

The 1842 Chartist Petition claimed:

> [T]he undoubted constitutional right of people, to meet freely, when, how, and whether they choose, in public places, peaceably, in the day, to discuss their grievances and political or other subjects, or for the purpose of framing, discussing, or passing any vote, petition, or remonstrance, upon any subject whatsoever.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

The 1905 Russian Petition listed as one of the measures needed to eliminate the ignorance of citizens and the arbitrariness of the state:

> An immediate proclamation of freedom and inviolability of the person, freedom of speech, press, association and worship.
>
> *Russian Petition 1905*

Opinions

One of the requirements to ensure the necessary quality of information is that people (citizens) should be allowed to hold opinions and be allowed to express their opinions vocally and/or in writing and print.

9. *Opinions*. All people (citizens) should be allowed to hold opinions and be allowed to express them (vocally and/or in writing/print) in order to further their preferred position so long as they abide by the

requirements (in point 8) concerning the nature of the information provided.

Organizations

Another requirement logically necessary to ensure the quality of information for representative democracy is that citizens be allowed to form groups, voluntary associations, of like-minded people in order to further their preferred position and, so, should be able to organize themselves in making public their views whether through literature or public meetings and demonstrations.

10. *Organizations*. All people (citizens) should be allowed to form groups, including political parties and voluntary organizations, and to organize themselves in making public their views whether through literature, meetings or public demonstrations so long, of course, that they abide by all of the requirements (in point 8) concerning the nature of the information provided.

Actions

Underlying these two logical arguments is a third: the expectation that such statements (speeches and writing) and public gatherings (meetings, marches and demonstrations) should not undermine democracy for, as made clear in the position taken on non-violent action in the cases of the US and Northern Ireland civil rights movements, in the conduct of the Russian petitioners and also the choice made by the Chartists to petition, democracy in practice is held up as a system for processing differences of opinion peacefully.

11. *Actions*. Statements (speeches and writing) and public gatherings (meetings, marches and demonstrations) should not be conducted in such a way as to undermine democracy. In other words, actions should not seek to involve violence and speeches and literature should not set out to be inflammatory or be deliberately offensive, whether in the use of language or in the expression of sentiment to those holding opinions contrary to their own.

Monitoring

It follows that in order to safeguard these requirements of representative democracy for the quality of information there must be effective means to monitor and control the information produced so to ensure that it complies with point 8 and is in plentiful and accessible supply. It also follows that there must be a means to ensure that the conduct of participating groups and individuals and of political institutions and the media is in line with these requirements: claims being backed up by objective evidence, opinions stated as such and expressed in language that is respectful to other opinions. The monitoring, that is, of the behaviour of those – whether individuals or groups and whether inside or outside the country – who are engaged in producing information or involved in actions of any kind that might undermine democracy: actions such as financing propaganda or donating large sums of money to one side of the debate, behaving for personal gain or using violence.

12. *Monitoring*. In order for representative democracy to serve the interests of citizens there must be effective means to monitor and control the conduct of groups and citizens and also that of political institutions and the media so to ensure compliance with the requirements set out in points 8, 9, 10 and 11, above.

Mass Education

And there is more. Beneath all these requirements logically there is a yet deeper layer of requirements necessary to fulfil the ideal in practice. For citizens to be free, able and willing to engage in the democratic process, where information from a variety of sources including opinions and positions with opposed views is available, it will be necessary that citizens are able to read, write and access information or be given adequate and unbiased assistance to those ends. It is necessary, too, that citizens are not only able to access information but are also motivated to seek it out and, furthermore, have the capability of weighing arguments and assessing information. Citizens will also need to have the capacity for organization or be able to have access to the help to do so when required. Clearly, too, if all these requirements for democracy are to be met, citizens will need to have

the capabilities and willingness to conduct themselves with due consideration to those with opinions contrary to their own.

13. *Mass education*. In order for people (citizens) to be free, able and willing to engage in and conduct themselves in the ways required in a democracy, they must be able (or be given the necessary help) to read, write and assess such information and be motivated to do so. They must also have the capability for and know-how of organization and for accessing information and assistance.

    A general good level of education and knowledge is therefore required and an effective means for assisting those who, nevertheless, lack sufficiency in these accomplishments must also be provided.

Absence of Favouritism and Prejudice

Finally, the logical requirement follows that some people and some groups are not favoured above others in respect of opportunities and capacity for participation: for example, by being provided with information unavailable to others or being in a position to propagate their opinions above those of other groups. Simply having an organization can itself be used advantageously in pressing for policies beyond the purpose for which the organization was set up (Lively, 1975, pp. 22–24). Ideally absence of favouritism would apply not only in respect of access to information and organizational advantages but also to education, to finances and to powerful or influential contacts. As the petition and civil rights movements cases each showed, not only must it be the case that some groups are not favoured over others in terms of resources but also that there must not be prejudices that weigh disproportionately in favour of some groups and individuals and against others.

14. *Absence of favouritism and prejudice*. There must not be people or groups that are favoured above others through not only access to information and education, but also through access to finances and contacts such that voting is weighted unfairly. It follows also that neither must there be prejudices that serve to give unfair weight to the interests of some as opposed to others.

Conclusion

As consideration of the 2016 referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, the debate surrounding it and the logical requirements of democracy that followed have shown, representative democracy – whether as an ideal or as logically best in practice – is a very tall order: so tall, indeed, most likely impossible to reach. This is so not because direct and indirect democracy are not the same but because of practical realities. Consensus as one will of the people is not attainable, turnout at elections affects interpretation of 'majority' and, in any case, minority interests are also important. The quality, quantity and accessibility of information ideally required and appropriately monitored, furthermore, are impractical to meet fully.

More positively, however, the case of the EU referendum has shown that referendums can be a useful device in representative democracies for providing citizens with a chance to influence a policy directly. However, given the related problems of interpretation of majority, of providing adequate information and of timing together with the difficulties of containing misinformation, as well as the potential for debates around referendum questions to increase division rather than reduce or even resolve division, the logical conclusion is that referendums should be a device not for the exercise of power by citizens in deciding policy directly but as a means for the limitation and control of the government's power through influence in its policy decisions.

Note

1. For a detailed account and analysis of the events and conditions leading to the referendum and explanation of its outcome see Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley (2017). For a brief account of the most important arguments made for Britain to leave the European Union see Lee (2016). It is notable that the top two 'most common' arguments listed by Lee are 'The EU threatens British sovereignty' followed by 'The EU is strangling the UK in burdensome regulation.' ⏎

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7
DEMOCRACY AS THEORY AND PRACTICE

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The requirements of democracy generated from the EU debate and the practice of the 2016 referendum have clearly shown that democracy is a tall order whether as an ideal or in practice. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the requirements of representative democracy generated by and built upon the case of the debate concerning membership of the European Union and the 2016 referendum offers an exhaustive list of such requirements. Indeed, following the lessons generated from the two petition cases and the two civil rights movement cases there are requirements that are notably absent.

The 14 Points in Comparative Perspective

The most strikingly absence from the EU generated list are the requirements for social and economic fairness and equality, which are prominent in the 1842 Chartist Petition and the 1905 Russian Petition, and also feature in both the US and Northern Ireland civil rights cases with respect to jobs and housing. The exception to this in the EU generated list of requirements was the importance of education for the purpose of acquiring information and aiding participation that followed logically from the EU debate (point 13). In contrast, in the Russian and United States cases the demands for

universal education were explicit. The 1905 Russian petition demanded 'free universal and compulsory public education financed by the state' and the US civil rights movement set down the goal of 'adequate integrated education' as one of the six official goals of the March on Washington in 1963 (Martin Luther King Jr Research and Education Institute, no date).

The requirements for equality before the law and for the absence of violence against the person, which were present in all four of the petition and civil rights movement cases, were also not featured in the EU debate. Freedom of conscience in matters of religion, too, is not listed as a requirement of democracy in the EU debate and referendum list but it is specifically made in the Russian petition (where separation of state and religion is listed as a need). In the 1842 Chartist Petition religion features in the context of criticism of the advantages given to the state religion and it plays a crucial part in the history of Ireland as the background to formation of NICRA. Freedom of religious conscience can, perhaps, if conscience and opinion are taken as the same, be squeezed into the general right to hold opinions as generated from the EU case (point 9). Similarly, the requirement for the right to strike, stressed in the Russian petition, which, too, was absent from the EU referendum case could, possibly, be fitted into the right to protest (point 10).

Though the 14 points generated from the EU debate and 2016 referendum may not cover all the requirements for democracy, the list of points has shown considerable agreement with the requests made in the Chartist and Russian petitions and in the US and Northern Ireland civil rights movement campaigns. Such agreement is more evident where the points relate to a perceived ideal of citizens' involvement in representative democracy. For points 9, 10, 11 and 14, support is found in all of the cases:

- *Point 9*: All citizens should be allowed to hold opinions and to express them.
    - Russian Petition 1905: Fits with the petitioners' request for 'freedom of speech, press, association, and worship.'
    - Chartist Petition 1842: Fits with:

> it is the undoubted constitutional right of the people to meet freely, when, how and whether they choose, in public places,

> peaceably, in the day, to discuss their grievances and political or other subjects, or for the purpose of framing, discussing, or passing any vote, petition, or remonstrance, upon any subject whatsoever.

    - Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement: One of the stated objectives of NICRA: 'to demand guarantees for freedom of speech, assembly and association' (CAIN, no date).
    - US Civil Rights Movement: Fits with campaign for African Americans to secure their rights according to the First Amendment to the American Constitution which includes the words: 'Congress shall make no law … abridging the freedom of the speech, or of the press; or the right to people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.'
- *Point 10*: All citizens should be allowed to join together to form interest groups, including political parties and voluntary organizations.
    - Russian Petition: Fits with the demands for 'freedom of association' and also for the right to form 'cooperative associations and professional worker unions.'
    - Chartist Petitions: Fits with position as stated in 9, above.
    - Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement: Fits with position as stated in 9, above.
    - US Civil Rights Movement: Fits with position as stated in 9, above.
- *Point 11*: Statements, spoken or written, and public meetings, marches and demonstrations should be conducted in such a way as not to involve violence, be inflammatory or deliberately offensive to those holding opinions contrary to their own.
    - Russian Petition: Implied in the listed need for 'the freedom and inviolability of the person.'
    - Chartist Petitions: In line with 'peaceably' as in 9, above.
    - US Civil Rights Movement: Fits with the adoption of non-violent methods of civil disturbance.

    - Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement: Fits with NICRA's adoption of non-violent methods of protest.
- *Point 14*: Individuals or groups must not be favoured above others in respect of access to information and education or access to finances and contacts such that voting is weighted unfairly and, so, unequally.
    - Chartist Petitions: Fits with the demand for 'The suffrage to be exempt from the corruption of the wealthy and the violence of the powerful.'
    - Russian Petition: Fits with the reference to 'our employers and managers' for whom workers' requests to improve conditions were 'illegal,' and 'insulting to them' and also with the criticisms made against the 'bureaucratic administration… who not only care nothing for the needs of the people, but flagrantly abuse them.'
    - US Civil Rights Movements: Fits with the campaign against racial discrimination in the United States.
    - Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement: Fits with the campaign to end discrimination against Catholics.

Points 8, 'Nature of information,' and 13, 'Mass education,' while relating to a perceived ideal of citizen's participation through being well-informed, aided by education, also highlight the role of government in achieving movement towards that ideal through legislation. Points 1 and 2 focus fully on the role of government in democracy and the process of administration through which citizens' interests are served and these points also find support in the petition and civil rights cases.

- *Point 1*: Bureaucracy to be servants of citizens' interests.
    - Russian Petition: Meshes with the petitioners' objection to arbitrary and corrupt bureaucratic rule: 'the bureaucratic administration, comprised of embezzlers of public funds and robbers, who not only care nothing for the needs of the people, but flagrantly abuse them.'
    - Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement: Fits with NICRA's demand for non-discriminatory allocation of housing and jobs.

    - US Civil Rights Movement: Fits with the objection made about racial discrimination in the application of voting procedures.
- *Point 2*: Sovereignty: the interests of citizens to be served by the governments of their choosing.
    - Chartist Petitions: In line with the People's Charter 1839, 'we demand that they ['the interests of the people'] be confided to the keeping of the people.'
    - Russian Petition: Fits with the petitioners' idea of democracy as a government serving the interests of all of the people of their country: 'it is essential that the people help themselves and govern themselves. Truly, only they know their real needs.'

Of the remaining points brought out in the EU debate and referendum, point 4, 'Minority interests,' fits with NICRA's campaign for the political system to end discrimination against Catholics and with the US Civil Rights campaign to end discrimination against African Americans. Point 6, 'Voting,' reflects on the Chartist and Russian petitioners' demands for universal suffrage, secret ballot and votes counting equally, adding that representative democracy needs to take into account the interests of non-voters as well as voters and that choice between alternative policies is also necessary. Both points relate to the difficulties of constructing a representative democracy in the image of democracy's ideal.

The difficulties of constructing a representative democracy in the image of the ideal of democracy, in which all interests are represented, is also highlighted by point 3, 'Cooperation and compromise.' The difficulty follows from engaging in cooperation and compromise sometimes requiring putting the interests of others before one's own interests. The problem is that this requirement necessitates compromises that do not satisfy all interests and, in consequence, the ideal of representative democracy in which all interests are served, is not, therefore, reached. In the case of the EU membership debate it is a problem exacerbated by policies involving the interests not only of the citizens of one country but also of others. Similarly, point 5, 'Majority,' which highlights that democracy is not equivalent to majority rule and point 4, 'Minority,' which states that minority interests must be taken into account, also relate to this practical problem of not always being able to satisfy all interests all of the time.

Points 6, ‘Voting,’ which stresses the importance of the choice between policy alternatives, and 7, ‘Conduct of referendums and elections,’ which emphasizes the need for sufficient time to be available for the process of democracy in respect of the gathering of information, scrutinizing legislation and in the conduct of elections and referendums, each relate to the practical limitations of time and resources.

Point 12, ‘Monitoring,’ which requires a monitoring procedure to ensure compliance with other points in the list of requirements in order that representative democracy can operate and be maintained brings with it the great difficulties of constructing the procedure, not least without violating other potential requirements of democracy such as the right to a private life without state interference.

Reasons Why Theory Will Never Be Met in Practice

Consideration of the practicalities of representative democracy do more than demonstrate that democracy is a tall order; they indicate that democracy in theory will never be met fully in practice and this is not simply because of the difficulties of constructing appropriate and acceptable practical procedures.

Incompatible Requirements

One of the reasons for why democracy in theory can never be met fully in practice is that the requirements made of democracy are not always compatible. This is most glaringly illustrated by points 2 and 3 in the list: ‘sovereignty’ and ‘cooperation and compromise.’ Point 2 states that a democracy must serve the interests of the citizens of the country in question and be served by the government of their choosing. Point 3, however, states that cooperation and compromise are needed, which must sometimes require the putting of the interests of others before one’s own, including when dealing with others outside one’s country.

The problem of incompatible requirements is also evident with respect to points 4 and 5, which concern the satisfaction of both majority and minority

views on issues. This is an example of the wider problem of differences of opinions and interests and that they may not simply differ but be in direct conflict. Taking, as illustration, the requirement for mass education, point 13 in the list, paying taxes for education may go against the interests of those without children who would prefer to spend their money on things other than taxes levied for the purpose of expenditure on children's education. Other 'needs' in the 1905 Russian Petition also offer good illustrations. The right to strike, listed as one of the 'measures against the ignorance of the Russian people and against its lack of rights,' will be in conflict with the profit-making interests of employers. The interests of those who benefit from a progressive income tax, a need listed under 'measures against the poverty of the people,' will be in conflict with the interests of those who are richer and who would, therefore, be required to pay higher taxes.

Not only do opinions and interests differ, both between groups and between individuals, but often incompatible things may be wanted by an individual or a particular group. As examples: an individual may well both want to pay lower taxes and to have their government spend more on the maintenance of roads; a voluntary group set up to campaign for the United Kingdom leaving the European Union may be opposed to a trade border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Cost

Another reason why the theory and practice of democracy cannot match with exactness is that the fulfilment of the requirements of representative democracy may be so costly that some, perhaps most or even all, will not be fully achieved. Budgetary constraints will put limits on what expenditure is possible, which may result in interests not being met sufficiently and sometimes, with other promised policies taking precedence, not be met at all. For example, the financing of elections and referendums is costly and fewer, therefore, may occur than might be ideal: ideal for the Chartists, who wanted general elections held annually, certainly. Budgetary constraints may also put limits on the provision of sufficient staff in the bureaucracy to gather all the information needed for policy-making. Other examples are that opportunities for all opinions to be sought may prove too costly to finance, as may the provision of adequate protection of those participating

in demonstrations and marches. Importantly, too, providing state education to the levels required in a democracy for, say, the acquiring of complete understanding of complex information by everyone, may also prove too costly ever to be fully reached.

Time

A further reason why theory and practice may not match is that time restrictions may be necessary, and, in consequence, actions may be taken based on inadequate evidence or insufficient consideration of interests even when not subjected to budgetary constraints. Representation of interests involves action and not just promises and things such as forthcoming elections also impose time constraints. Sometimes some of the information ideally obtained will simply be unable to be obtained in the time available. In consequence, mistakes will sometimes be made in the drawing up of policies and in their implementation.

Whether due to budgetary constraints, time limits, incompatibilities leading to some interests not being served or compromises leading to interests not being fully served, the ideal of democracy where all interests are served can never exist in practice. To paraphrase a well-known statement attributed to Abraham Lincoln, the governments of representative democracies can never succeed fully in serving all of the interests of all of the citizens all of the time. Crucially, furthermore, representative democracies rely on this being accepted by citizens.

Cooperation and Compromise

That wants may be incompatible and that costs and time limits may prevent interests being fully served do not rule out that both individuals and groups can, nevertheless, be capable of rank-ordering their preferences and through cooperation succeed in achieving compromise. Following through the example used above, tax thresholds could be raised and less spent on road improvements but to a level accepted as satisfactory, or arrangements might be negotiated through some kind of compensation scheme for persons disadvantaged by problems encountered arising from adverse road

conditions. The example of the trade border between Northern Ireland, now outside the EU, and Southern Ireland, still within the EU, may, however, illustrate that there are no guarantees for compromise solutions for all situations arising from wants that might be incompatible. Neither are there guarantees, even when issues raised are inherently bargainable, that citizens will be willing to bargain.

Though not providing a solution to every difficulty, compromise is crucial to representative democracy. It is crucial both to decisions made by governments and to those made by citizens whether as independent individuals or grouped together as voluntary associations and action groups. Governments cannot serve all interests equally, not least where they are conflicting and incompatible, but they may try to do so by seeking compromises, encouraging cooperation, considering strength of feeling in the ordering of preferences and gauging the relative impact of policies on some groups over others. Naturally, the success of achieving this will be dependent on the willingness of citizens and governments to respect others' views even while working towards changing or modifying them.

Society

It follows from the importance of the willingness of citizens to understand that governments cannot serve all interests and to respect others' views that it would be reasonable to conclude that a representative democracy requires a society in which there is an approach to problem-solving and decision-making that involves cooperation and compromise and that is practised in everyday life. A society, perhaps, rather like that found by Alexis de Tocqueville when researching the cause of the existence of democracy in America in the 1830s:

> Everything is in motion around you; here the people of one quarter of a town are met to decide upon the building of a church; there the election of a representative is going on; a little farther, the delegates of a district are hastening to the town in order to consult upon some local improvements; in another place, the labourers of a village quit their ploughs to deliberate upon the project of a road or a public school.
>
> *Alexis de Tocqueville*, Democracy in America, Volume One, *1998 [1835], pp. 95–96.*

A society, too, that is rather like those regions in Italy, between 1970 and 1989, where Putnam (1993, p. 88) identified a 'civic community,' which he described as 'bound together by horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation' and commented:

> Citizens in a civic community, on most accounts, are more than merely active, public-spirited, and equal. Virtuous citizens are helpful, respectful, and trustful toward one another, even when they differ on matters of substance.
>
> *Robert D. Putnam*, Making Democracy Work, *1993, pp. 88–89*

Such a society is one in which not simply not everyone gets their first choice in the serving of their interests but that sometimes it may mean that 'second best' is the best that anyone gets.

Experience

The question then is whether it is the representative democratic political system or the give-and-take and working-together society – society where cooperation and compromise are accepted as the right kind of behaviour – that comes first. After exploring the differences in the histories of the regions, Putnam tends towards the view that the important aspects of the civic community came first and 'the more civic its region, the more effective its government (Putnam, 1993, p. 98). He also finds political leaders in those regions to be 'readier to compromise than their counterparts in less civic regions (Putnam, 1993, p. 105). De Tocqueville (1998, p. 211) tends towards the other direction, arguing, for example, that 'the electoral system brings a multitude of citizens permanently together who would otherwise always have remained unknown to one another' and further comments:

> The legislators of America … thought that it would be well to infuse political life into each portion of the territory in order to multiply to an infinite extent opportunities of acting in concert for all the members of the community and to make them constantly feel their mutual dependence.

Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Volume Two, *1998 [1840], p. 211*

A strong argument has also been made that positive experience of working within organizations or knowledge of such positive experience is crucial. Milner (1990) encapsulates the case of Sweden as follows:

> To put it simply: satisfactory experience or knowledge of organizational participation reinforces the values of public-spiritedness and practical moderation which in turn reinforces organizational participation.
>
> *Henry Milner*, Sweden: Social Democracy in Practice, *1990, p. 74*

Milner (1990, p. 84) generalizes organizations in this view to include both pressure groups and economic organizations in Sweden but argues that this 'spirit of accommodation' found in Swedish organizations is very different from 'the adversarial spirit of confrontation and polarization North Americans and Britons are accustomed to.'

The question of whether, in general, it is the representative democratic political system or the give-and-take and working-together society, where cooperation and compromise are accepted as the right kind of behaviour that comes first, cannot be readily answered. A serious attempt to answer it would require comparative historical analysis not only of cases of the societies of countries governed by representative democracy but also cases where representative democracy has not been established even though the country's society is one where cooperation and compromise are valued and operate in practice.

Elections

Whether cooperation and compromise are developed through experiences of representative democracy or representative democracy is the outcome of a society in which cooperation and compromise are practised, cooperation and compromise are required to enable representative democratic governments to govern, for it is crucial in order that citizens are willing to accept the rule of governments for which they did not vote. It is also necessary for citizens to be willing to wait to vote at the next election in the

hope that they may achieve their wanted change next time around and then to do so again if the result is still not what they wanted. This illustrates that elections are important in representative democracy in a further way.

Elections are necessary not only for choosing governments and for removing them but also for demonstrating, through the election results and tallies of votes, that one's own position is not shared by everyone or even a majority of others. The German Marxist theorist and a leading member of the German Social Democratic Party, Karl Kautsky, optimistically expecting it to work to the benefit of his cause, recognized this in *The Social Revolution*, published in 1902.

> Elections are a means to count ourselves and the enemy, and they grant thereby a clear view of the relative strength of the classes and parties, their advance and their retreat. They prevent premature outbreaks and they guard against defeats. They also grant the possibility that the opponents will themselves recognize the untenability of many positions and freely surrender them when their maintenance is no life-and-death question for them.
>
> *Karl Kautsky, The Social Revolution, 1902, p. 171*

So, in representative democracy not only can governments be changed and are changed through elections but also, and crucially, opinions can and do change over time too. Opinions can be moderated through learning and understanding of others' opinions and by becoming aware of the relative strengths of support for views and counterviews. Events, whether expected or unexpected, may also lead to changes of view.

Though, as Milner contends, countries such as North America and Britain can, in contrast to Sweden, be characterized as adversarial, confrontational and even polarizing in negotiations between organizations and government it is, nevertheless, the case that in the end cooperation and compromise are achieved. Furthermore, it is mostly achieved without resort to strike action or street protest. In any case, peacefully conducted strikes and protests too may be ways, as Milner (1990, p. 74) puts it, of having 'satisfactory experience or knowledge of organizational participation' that 'reinforces the values of public-spiritedness and practical moderation which in turn reinforces organizational participation.'

As the lessons of the Chartist petitions and processions and the United States civil rights movements and marches have demonstrated, positive experiences and positive outcomes, even when only on balance – balanced, that is, in outweighing the receiving of violent responses and disappointments in failing to achieve all that was wanted – play a part in the prevention of the breakdown of the political system and, so, in the history of the development, strengthening and maintenance of representative democracy.

Conclusion

Equality before the law and the absence of violence against the person are requirements of democracy. Freedom of conscience in matters of religion and the right to strike and, more generally, to protest are also requirements of democracy. The rights of citizens to hold opinions and to express them, to be allowed to form and join interest groups and voluntary organizations including political parties, to take action through statements, meetings and demonstrations but without recourse to violence or giving deliberate offence are, similarly, requirements of democracy. For citizens' equality in voting not to be undermined there also needs to be an absence of social and economic inequalities of the levels that hinder access to information, education, finances and contacts.

In practice, representative democracy can never achieve the ideal of democracy with respect to representing all interests because interests can be incompatible and even in direct conflict. Costs and time constraints, too, may apply. In consequence, cooperation and compromise are needed by representative governments in order to seek to achieve the policy outcomes that are both for the community and have the support of the community, even by those citizens who preferred alternative policies. Cooperation and compromise, too, are needed by citizens in representative democracies in order to accept governments formed from parties for which they did not vote; they need to be willing to wait until the next general election in order to vote the government out of office and again, if the election result dictates, to accept the government's re-election.

A further reason for the importance of elections in representative democracy has also been argued. Elections are important in revealing the ratios of support for parties and therefore views on policies and policy programmes, the latter also applying to referendums. Elections, thereby, both inform citizens of the extent to which their views are shared and of the nature and support for other positions. In this way, free and fair elections play a role in strengthening the value put on cooperation and compromise. In order for a representative democracy to be sustained, cooperation and compromise need to be features of society that are practised every day. It follows, therefore, that representative democracy is related not simply to a set of political institutions of government and the process of administration through which citizens' interests and those of the community are served, but also to a kind of society in which cooperation and compromise are the expected and accepted ways of behaviour.

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Democracy Wanting

Theories

INTRODUCTION

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Discussion of the points generated through consideration of the EU debate and referendum held in the UK in 2016 and comparisons made, alongside the cases of the Chartist petitions, the 1905 Russian petition and the civil rights movements in the United States and Northern Ireland have highlighted the problems faced, in practice, by representative democracy in achieving the ideal of representative democracy: the ideal in which all citizens' interests and those of the community are served and furthered. These problems have been identified as those presented by incompatible and conflicting interests, time constraints in collecting information and in framing and implementing policies and the cost constraints in doing so. Cost constraints have also been identified as impacting on society through persisting social and economic inequalities that hinder access to information, education, finances and contacts. Such conditions are detrimental to citizens' general capacity to engage in political participation and, through not turning out to vote, also to citizens' equality in voting.

These are not, however, the only problems that representative democracy faces. There are problems that derive from within the political institutions designed for the purpose of a system of representation. There are theories – modern classics – furthermore, that contend that these problems are so serious that they undermine democracy even to the point of challenging the reality of representative democracy as democracy. These theories are concerned with bureaucracy, political parties and political organizations, the government itself, the state more widely, the media and economic and social power groups with a common theme that, rather than representing the interests of those intended to be served, the interests served are those of the

un-elected. Furthermore, the views of these theories are that representative democracies serve interests even to the extent of serving those directly opposed to the interests of the community. These theories not only identify serious challenges to representative democracy they also illustrate why representative democracy must be not just a system designed for representation but one also designed for the limitation and control of power.

8
BUREAUCRACY AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

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The state bureaucracy was the bane of the Russian petitioners in 1905: it was expressed in the petition as 'the bureaucratic administration, comprised of embezzlers of public funds and robbers, who not only care nothing for the needs of the people, but flagrantly abuse them.' Bureaucracy – those 'bureaucrats in Brussels' – was a major complaint of those in the United Kingdom opposed to membership of the European Union. The behaviour of bureaucrats was also a serious complaint made by Catholics in Northern Ireland in receipt of the discriminatory conduct over housing and government jobs; likewise, in the United States, discriminatory bureaucratic procedures were the means used for denying African Americans the vote. Bureaucracy, however, is essential to the workings of representative democracy. Indeed, bureaucracy is necessary for any organization with a membership which is larger than can be served by collective memory. Records are not needed where memory is sufficient but in all other cases the keeping of records is essential and especially so where, as in representative democracies, the aim is to serve the interests of their citizens and in doing so treat all citizens fairly and equally.

Modern societies are complex and the interests served by democratic political systems are complex too. Keeping records, therefore, is far from

bureaucracy's only function. Bureaucracy serves democracy by ensuring that avenues are open for ascertaining, representing and providing for citizens' interests. Bureaucracy is required, for example, for the administration and organization of elections and for the drawing-up and record-keeping of laws. Bureaucracy is also needed for the collection and distribution of taxes to pay for policies implemented by governments: policies that include those concerned with welfare, education, policing and defence. Furthermore, such policy areas require bureaucracy for their administration. Without bureaucracy representative democracy could not serve the interests of citizens: not fairly, not equally, not justly.

Not all forms of bureaucracy, however, are of the kind that can serve democracy; the state bureaucracy in Russia in 1905 was of that type. Russia was an autocracy, the tsar had absolute power. The role of the bureaucracy, therefore, was not to serve the public but to carry out the tsar's decrees. In consequence, bureaucrats were widely perceived as petty, obsessed with paperwork and implementing regulations for no good reason other than for demonstrating the bureaucrat's authority. They were also viewed as bullies who made arbitrary decisions and, furthermore, were open to bribery and involved in corruption. Such behaviour and such views of bureaucrats' behaviour, even at times when perhaps less than fully justified, were compounded by the bureaucracy setting itself apart by the wearing of uniforms and having a system with 14 different rankings not dissimilar to those in the army. The sheer size of Russia, with far-flung provincial towns and cities so distant from the centre, also aided and perhaps encouraged the bureaucrats to abuse their power. Appointment to the bureaucracy, restricted in any case by the unequal access to education, was also made on the basis of 'who you know' rather than on the basis of 'what you know' and, distinguished by their uniforms, they formed a status group separated from the rest of society.

Criticisms concerning the bureaucratic nature of the European Union had some parallels with those made in Tsarist Russia. Being run by 'bureaucrats in Brussels' the EU was viewed as run by the unelected and unconnected with Britain and neither run in the interests of nor accessible to the British public: in short, seen as 'undemocratic.' The regulations pursued were also viewed as petty: insistence on straight cucumbers was an oft-repeated example in spite of the existence of such a regulation being a complete fabrication. A complaint was also made that there was too much

unnecessary paperwork: the system, therefore, was 'time-wasting' and inefficient. And, in a way like the problem of the far-flung towns and cities in Russia, the continental administrative centre of Brussels viewed as too distant from the United Kingdom. Accusations of bribery and corruption were also made; the large size of the EU's bureaucracy seen, in part, as the consequence of 'jobs-for-the-boys,' jobs paid for by 'the British taxpayer.'

These ideas of bureaucrats 'being in it for themselves,' of there being too much 'red tape,' of their administering petty regulations, of the system unnecessarily burgeoning in size, of being undemocratic in not serving the people's interests, of being distant, secretive and a separate group are all problems recognized by the foremost theorist of bureaucracy: Max Weber, a German political economist writing in the early 20th century. In *Economy and Society*[1] Weber (2019) argued that bureaucracies, which importantly included those in representative democracies in modern societies, had an inevitable tendency to grow and not only that but to close in on themselves, so becoming secretive, and to usurp power from democratically elected governments. Weber additionally argued that, over time, the growing bureaucracy would become a boring, machine-like, inflexible system which would sap freedom of initiative.

Modern Bureaucracy

Criticisms of bureaucracy are easy to accept when applied to cases such as Tsarist Russia but Weber also applied them to the kind of bureaucracy that he viewed as best serving modern, representative democracy: legal-rational bureaucracy, on which he based his 'ideal type' of bureaucracy.[2] Such a bureaucracy would be strikingly different from that in Russia under Tsar Nicholas II. The ideal-type of bureaucracy would have a career structure based on appropriate, objective qualifications and promotion based on examinations. Those at the top of the hierarchy would have more responsibilities than those at the bottom with gradations between and a transparent salary structure to reflect this. Record-keeping would be essential and there would be proper record-keeping, with lots of copies in all appropriate files in order to prevent arbitrariness and to achieve the smooth-running of the bureaucracy and for it to be maintained. Such a structure would ensure that the appointment of new bureaucrats would not

be disruptive because they would quickly fit into their positions and carry out their required duties, as rules would be there to be followed, records there to be consulted and the hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy would mean that responsibility would move down from the top. Responsibility moving down from the top would entail both a system of checking and that the type of work carried out would be appropriate to the level of qualifications required at each level of the hierarchy. (See Weber 1964, pp. 329–341; Weber, 1991, pp. 196–204.)

A bureaucracy that is rule-following with a career structure and that keeps careful, accessible records, Weber argued, would be organizationally efficient. Recruited on the basis of merit with knowledge and training developed within the career structure, it would have, as he put it, 'technical superiority' (Weber, 1991, p. 214) as compared to any other form of administration. The crucial importance of rule-following and objective application of laws and rules by bureaucracies in democracies is illustrated in the running of elections. A register of the electorate must be kept and rules must be followed to ensure one-person-one-vote and rules must also be followed in the counting of votes and so on. No personal prejudice of any bureaucrat must be allowed to play a part. The importance of this is best illustrated by the unglamorous example of tax collection.

Tax, which is needed for the payment of the salaries of the state bureaucrats as well as for providing, for example, for schools and policing, must be collected according to set-down rules that apply to all and not according to the bureaucrat's own personal prejudices. So: the tax collector must neither charge less tax to family and friends nor accept bribes to do so in order, for example, to benefit the rich. Tax collectors must also not treat people of one religion differently from those of another religion; nor men or women more favourably than the other sex; nor treat one nationality or those of one particular skin-colour more advantageously than those of a different nationality or of a different skin-colour. All people must be treated according to set-down rules implemented by bureaucrats who themselves operate according to set-down rules so preventing the individual prejudices of bureaucrats from coming into play. So, bureaucrats must not treat Catholics differently from Protestants as was happening in Northern Ireland and was campaigned against by NICRA. Similarly, bureaucrats must not treat African Americans differently from 'white-Americans' as was happening in the United States before and during the civil rights campaign.

Not only does conforming to their roles as part of an organization where accurate records are kept and rules are abided by ensure equal treatment, it also ensures continuity over time. Newly appointed bureaucrats have rules that they must follow and carry on applying consistently. The analogy is used of the new recruits slotting in like cogs in a machine. Such a bureaucracy, so essential to the equal and fair treatment of all citizens and efficient from the point of view of the organization of the bureaucracy, however, offers no guarantee for democracy.

Bureaucracy as a Threat to Democracy

The first problem Weber foresaw was the one observed by those opposed to the UK's membership of the European Union: the problem of too much 'red tape.' It would be produced, not least, in all those multiple copies and time spent on keeping precise records, and, so, the operation of democracy would be slowed down. The second problem that Weber foresaw was that bureaucracy would also have a tendency to grow: a tendency, furthermore, that he viewed as inevitable. Additional bureaucrats would continually need to be appointed to carry out the expanding work, not least made greater by the red tape and precise record-keeping. Thus, he argued, serving the efficiency of the organization would come to outweigh the efficiency of outcome: namely, the government's representing and serving of the interests of the community.

Equally concerning, is Weber's argument that, even though recruitment would be on merit, the bureaucracy, once established, could become a closed status group: the very kind of privileged group to which democracy is opposed. This problem arose from the career structure so necessary for achieving the required objective application of rules. Requiring educational attainment and the level of attainment required at each level rising up in line with the administrative hierarchy, such a bureaucracy would cease simply to be a group selected on the basis of merit. At the top of the bureaucracy would develop a select group and one, furthermore, with expertise likely to be greater than that of the members of the elected government. This followed because whereas bureaucrats must be appointed on the basis of education, progress through examinations and have a job for life over which

time expertise is developed, politicians face very different prospects. (See Beetham, 1987, pp. 57–67 for the two preceding paragraphs.)

In a democracy, the requirement for politicians is that the possibility of standing as a candidate and becoming a parliamentary representative must be open to all and, because public opinions and interests are so crucial, there must be regular elections held often enough to reflect and adjust for changes in opinion and in the strengths and combinations of interests. It follows from this, therefore, that politicians cannot be permanent and, rather, must have short terms in office and be subject to recall. In addition, because they must reflect so many opinions, represent so many interests, and with neither opinions nor interests being static, politicians simply cannot narrowly hone expertise. In short, politicians cannot develop the specialist knowledge and technical expertise of the bureaucrats. This technical expertise of bureaucrats, their permanency, their group status through education and examinations makes bureaucracy, Weber argued, an alternative structure of power to that of the elected government. From this comes the tendency of bureaucracy to usurp power.

Furthermore, Weber recognized not only the danger of the top stratum of the bureaucracy becoming separated as an alternative source of power to that of the elected government but that implications would follow in the lower strata. The very machine-like structure of the bureaucracy with bureaucrats slotting in like cogs would be likely to work against the bureaucrats taking individual responsibility for their actions and so compound the bureaucracy's development of its own interests. Rather than serving the interests of citizens through enabling the efficiency of government outcomes, Weber argued that, over time, the bureaucracy would become best organized to serve its own interests both in terms of its workings as an organization and as a self-interested status group. This, furthermore, he argued, is helped by the requirement for secrecy which bureaucracies need in order to protect information gathered, not least that including personal information, and also by the inevitable tendency to grow that would lead to the bureaucracy becoming increasingly unresponsive.

In the light of Weber's arguments, citizens of representative democracies are right to be wary of bureaucracy for it can ever continue to grow and to impose yet more red tape. Furthermore, the size and organizational efficiency of the bureaucracy can sap bureaucrats' initiative ('computer says no'). And, most worrying of all, the bureaucracy can become a source

of power separate from that of the elected government: serving its own interests rather than those for which the government was elected to represent and, so, undermining democracy itself. The crucial questions then become whether these undemocratic tendencies of bureaucracies can be countered and, if so, how – questions with relevance to Sartori's (1987, p. 280) identification of the aspect of representative democracy relating to the 'limitation and control of power.'

Limitation and Control of Power

Weber's Solutions

One of the ways to counter the undemocratic tendencies of bureaucracies, Weber argued, would be for governments to avoid introducing policies that involved wide-scale planning. He favoured governments making piecemeal decisions, with such decisions being based on real costs and a society in which, in addition to the state bureaucracy, alternative independent groups served citizens interests; such competition thereby undermined the exclusive knowledge held by the state bureaucracy.

This argument, however, is less than convincing. For example, while Apartheid laws, which implemented a new plan for society based on race, would be ruled out, racist laws introduced in a piecemeal fashion would not. It also follows from Weber's proposal that the setting up of a welfare state would be ruled out even though its aims would be exactly to further the goals of social and economic equality and so help to achieve active participation in politics and in the community more generally.

Weber also considered that the type of democracy itself could affect the chances of the state bureaucracy usurping power and putting itself above government.[3] He favoured popularly elected, leadership democracy – 'plebiscitary democracy' – as the best type of government to counter the chances of the bureaucracy usurping the government's power. Governments of plebiscitary democracies are elected on the basis of universal suffrage (women as well as men and without any property qualifications) with leaders of mass (membership) parties competing for election by appealing directly to the electorate. Elections in themselves were not enough but

campaigning for votes with leaders appealing directly to voters, where there was competition between candidates who themselves had that entrepreneurial spirit that made them take responsibility – strong, independent and innovative politicians with charisma – enabled strong governments capable, in Weber's view, of standing up to bureaucracy.

Weber was not keen on coalition systems because he believed that they produced weak parliaments. Searching through real examples, he favoured the British parliamentary system and the US presidential systems because both had strong, mass-membership parties and strong politicians. He emphasized the importance of their politicians having a 'vocation' for politics and having charismatic qualities (Gerth and Mills, 1991, pp. 77–128). He gave the example of William Gladstone, the Liberal Party politician and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland four times between 1868 and 1894, and his 'whistle-stop' election campaign. In his campaign Gladstone travelled by train from city to city and spoke directly to voters, giving stirring speeches that lasted for hours and to large crowds of people.

Weber especially admired the practical advantage of the British system in having a Loyal Opposition: a government in waiting with its members each having the official title of 'shadow minister.' In parliament the opposition politicians, not least the shadow cabinet ministers, could practise the art and craft of politics. There they could engage in oratory, adopt well thought-through and practised positions and take responsibility for the positions that they took, so preparing for becoming the government. In such two-party systems, he argued, parliaments would be strong, and when a new government won an election, having had previous practice for taking office, it too would be strong. The strong form of government that such systems produced, would, in Weber's view, mean that ministers could master their brief and take responsibility such that they would be able to keep bureaucrats in check. Bureaucracy, in spite of its technical superiority, could thereby be prevented from rising above government and so retain the bureaucracy's intended function of serving the interests of the government in the representation of citizens' interests: interests that had been demonstrated through citizens' votes in elections.

On the other hand, in addition to its two competing mass parties, the attraction of the American system for Weber was that presidents got themselves elected and re-elected through not only mass party organization

but also through direct contact with the electorate and, in consequence, were directly responsible to the electorate. To get themselves elected, presidents, therefore, had to have flair: that combination of talent and charisma which would ensure that they could stand up to bureaucrats; be above the bureaucracy. Furthermore, both the British and the American mass parties had their own bureaucracies that could act as sources of competing ideas and information; these bureaucracies also had the ability to propose ways of implementing policies.

Though Weber liked the presidential system for its strong president, it was the British state bureaucracy of which he most approved because it was set up to serve whichever party was elected as the government. The bureaucracy was not above government, it advised the government and administered for the government in the serving of citizens: hence the name Civil Service. Furthermore, British civil servants were recruited as generalists rather than technocrats and this, in their not being specialists, also counteracted the tendency to usurp power.

Critical Responses and Alternative Solutions

Less Rigidity in the Bureaucracy

The type of bureaucracy that Weber puts forward with bureaucrats in machine-like fashion simply following and applying rules, can be questioned as an ideal type of bureaucracy for representative democracy. Certainly, having bureaucrats working according to laid-down rules that can be followed by each new recruit is logically crucial for the equal and fair treatment of citizens. It seems unlikely, however, that, in practice, bureaucrats could work completely in machine-cog fashion. Whether, for example, to avoid boredom or to gain satisfaction from seeing a job done well through the thoroughness of its execution or in its being carried out as quickly as care will allow, initiative is likely to be shown. Indeed it may only be because of such human characteristics that include the capacity to take initiative and act flexibly, within the rules, when need calls that bureaucracies can be prevented from grinding close to a halt.

Some flexibility, and of the right kind, could actually offer a way of achieving both technical and organizational efficiency. As an example, rigid

application of deadlines for paying taxes could lead to a firm's bankruptcy and so loss of revenue to the government. On the other hand, permitting a short delay might allow the bills owed to the firm the next day or the next week to be paid so keeping the firm afloat and so, also, for tax revenue to continue to be paid to the government. Such flexibility would not only benefit the firm, the government's revenues and reduce bureaucrats' time spent on form-filling and lengthy procedures, it could also ensure the smoother-running of the bureaucracy and, in consequence, reduce its threat to democracy. Not acting like faceless cogs, information could be passed not only down the hierarchy but also up as a way to enable problems caused by red tape to be recognized and acted upon. Through such responses rules might possibly even be improved. In the example of the taxman dealing with the firm facing bankruptcy, the information could be passed upwards and a flexibility rule that covered such cases could be introduced into procedures to be followed in the future.

Government Policies and Secrecy

The claims that bureaucracy has an inherent tendency to grow and become increasingly secretive have also been questioned. Beetham (1987, pp. 111–119) argues that the growth of bureaucracy will depend on the policies introduced in respect of their requirement for secrecy in their implementation. He draws particular attention to those policies relating to the protection of national security: those concerned with foreign policy, nuclear weapons and terrorism. Sweden's neutrality, he argues, has led to a more open state than, for example, is the case of the United States. Thus, it may be that secrecy in the bureaucracy is there to protect not the bureaucracy but the government and it is only because the government chooses to require it that bureaucracy is able to exploit it. As a possible safeguard, an Official Secrets Act could be balanced by a Freedom of Information Act. Furthermore, information not available in one country may be able to be obtained in another, less secretive, country.

Experience and Commitment not Charisma and Plebiscitary Democracy

Plebiscitary democracy, as proposed by Weber, is a questionable answer to the problems for democracy that bureaucracy poses. Today, the examples of US Presidents Donald Trump, whose refusal to accept his defeat in the 2020 presidential election led to a violent mob attack on the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. on 6 January 2021 in an attempt to keep him power, and Richard Nixon, who was complicit in covering up a break-in to the Democrat Party election campaign headquarters that took place less than five months before the November 1972 Presidential Election, clearly illustrate how Weber's idea of the advantages of a strong, charismatic leader of a mass political party could prove anything but a solution to threats posed to democracy. Such leaders can use their powers not to enhance but to undermine democracy.

Had Weber lived longer, furthermore, in Germany he would have witnessed a far more telling example of the dangers of his plebiscitary democracy solution to bureaucracies usurping power. The Weimar Constitution, in which Weber personally played a part as a member of the committee that advised on the new constitution in line with his theoretical position for which he campaigned, provided, in Article 48, for a strong president. It was Article 48 that enabled Adolf Hitler, within the constitution, to become Chancellor and then, from his position of power, to destroy all vestiges of democracy (O'Kane, 2004, pp. 132–149). As these examples demonstrate, whether charismatic or not, leaders of mass parties can use lies to bolster their own importance, to conceal their mistakes or to undermine the opposition in order to win an election.

The threat to democracy posed by strong, charismatic leaders are of general concern and presidential systems in which the president is directly elected seem especially problematic – particularly if the president is one who tells lies and the lies are made to seem believable through biased media that both promulgate them and support conspiracy theories or, at worst, serve as a vehicle for propaganda.

Weber's arguments about the benefits of government members through experience of debating in parliament as opposition prior to taking office, however, do seem to hold value. A rule that presidential candidates should have had experience as an elected representative within the debating chamber might be a useful requirement for standing for office. An apprenticeship in politics where the capacity for public speaking, the garnering of support on policy issues and deep comprehension of the issues

(the brief), rather than 'charisma,' might be a better way of viewing politicians who would be best placed to be able to counter the undemocratic tendencies of bureaucracy.

Building on Ideas from Practice

Possible solutions to bureaucracy's threat to democracy are also to be found elsewhere in Weber's arguments. Working from the idea of the advantages of multiple parties and groups in society with their own bureaucracies supporting competing interests suggests that a more promising line to pursue would be to stress the importance of there being more than two parties and of there also being multiple interest/pressure groups, social movements and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which all supply information and technical knowledge independently and directly to the government, the press and the media. Having a Loyal Opposition clearly has an advantage in having a new government available for election but capacity for debate and strength of conviction can still be practised and developed by representatives of multiple parties within parliament. Witnessing and experiencing such debate, political parties can readily see with which other party or parties a viable coalition could be formed. The existence of multiple parties, each one with its own bureaucracy, could each be providing alternative sources of information and so serve to counterweigh the threat to democracy posed by the state bureaucracy.

Tried and tested examples suggest further ways of keeping the bureaucracy in check to reduce the likelihood of its usurping power from the democratically elected government. A Freedom of Information Act can serve to weaken the problems stemming from secrecy. Both the self-enclosure problem of the bureaucracy and of their technical superiority might also each be alleviated by specialists being consulted directly by governments. Parliamentary committees which investigate not only minister's decisions and policies but also those of civil servants could help, too. Following the example of Sweden adopted by the UK and elsewhere, an ombudsman to investigate complaints made by members of the public concerning experiences with the workings of government bureaucracy both central and local could also be of value. Having direct contact with constituents is another way in which representatives can weaken

bureaucracy's potential to usurp power, whether through questions concerning the implementation of policies being asked openly in parliament or through investigation and contact with the media.

Conclusion

Bureaucracy is essential to the working of representative democracy and to be at its most effective and organizationally efficient it should be a 'civil service': that is, a bureaucracy that would be objective and remain in place with each change of government. It would be rule-following and hierarchical with a career structure and selection based on appropriate, objective qualifications and promotion based on examinations. Those at the top of the hierarchy would have more responsibility than those at the bottom with grades in between and a transparent salary structure in accordance with responsibilities. There would be proper and accurate record-keeping with multiple copies in appropriate files to prevent arbitrariness and to achieve smooth-running.

Though essential to the working of representative democracy, however, even such a 'civil service' has a tendency to grow unnecessarily in size, to hinder policy implementation through red tape, to become unresponsive and to become secretive. Yet more problematic for representative democracy, bureaucracy also has a tendency to usurp power from elected governments and to serve the interests of the bureaucracy rather than that of citizens.

There are, though, ways to counter the tendencies in bureaucracy that threaten representative democracy. They point to having a political system where there are multiple political organizations, including competing political parties each with their own bureaucracies for generating information. The ways to counter the tendencies in bureaucracy that threaten representative democracy also point to the necessity for agreed and set down rules and procedures to ensure that politicians, presidents especially, are knowledgeable and practised in procedures and debate and have a proven record of honesty. It follows that an open society with a free press, freedom to form organizations, freedom to hold opinions and where there is not propaganda but unbiased information that is freely available offers the general condition for the limitation and control of power.

Notes

1. Economy and Society was mostly written in the years 1910 to 1913 and published as W*irtschaft and Gesellschaft*, in 1922, two years after Weber's death. ⏎
2. An ideal type is an objective construct with the purpose of being used as a comparative device. It is constructed from elements of real cases but as the epitome of cases neither necessarily exists in reality nor conveys moral recommendation. For expansion and discussion of Weber's method see Gerth and Mills (1991, pp. 59–61). ⏎
3. For elaboration and discussion of Weber's theory of leadership democracy see Beetham (1987, pp. 67–71) and also Beetham (1985, pp. 51–55, 96–116 and 226–240) where attention is additionally drawn to comparisons made by Weber between the German and British political systems. ⏎

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9
POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEADERS

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Bureaucracy is not the only political organization that can pose a threat to representative democracy. Political parties and, as consideration of examples offered in respect of bureaucracy have shown, the leaders of parties, too, have the potential to undermine the representation and furtherance of citizens' interests. Furthermore, this potential threat to democracy has been theorized to extend to all organized political groups.

In *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, published in 1911, Robert Michels, a German social scientist, argued that over time political parties inevitably become undemocratic – and not just parties, but all political organizations. His claim is that once the organization is established it becomes separated from its members and moves to fulfilling the role of furthering the interests not of those it was set up to represent but those of the leadership of the organization. This argument is especially critical for political parties because they may go on to form a government. If Michels is right then governments in representative democracies will never truly represent the interests of the electorate: democracy in practice, therefore, inherently fitting the description of 'what is called a democracy,' as ascribed to Moung Ka by Saki in his short story 'The Comments of Moung Ka' (Munro, 1993). Michels' view that leaders of political parties and organizations develop and use the organization to further interests of their own that diverge from those

that they are supposed to be representing is known as 'the iron law of oligarchy' (Michels, 1968: p. 342).

The causes of this iron law of oligarchy, Michels (1968) argued, are a combination of the development of organization itself and of psychological factors. As organization grows in size, which it is bound to do as membership grows, a need for specialization occurs and, so, a division of labour. The consequent competence in the workings of the organization and specialist knowledge – he gives the examples of fiscal issues and foreign policy (p. 109) – then leads to the leadership, bolstered by its layer of administrators, the 'bureaucracy,' into professional leaders who, with the superiority of their knowledge and experience, cannot be removed.

> By a universally applicable social law, every organ of the collectivity, brought into existence through the need for the division of labour, creates for itself, as soon as it becomes consolidated, interests peculiar to itself. The existence of these special interests involves a necessary conflict with the interests of the collectivity.
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> *Robert Michels*, Political Parties, 1968, p. 353

In itself this problem of interests developing need not necessarily be a problem for democracy if the leadership chooses not to exploit their elevated position and endeavours to represent the interests of the membership rather than their own interests. And, of course, so long as effective means for their removal is in place if the leaders do choose to exploit their position.

Michels argues, however, that there are psychological factors which ensure that leaders will exploit their superior positions. One factor, he claims, is because people like strong leadership, indeed have a psychological need for leadership, and the reason for this is that people (citizens) find the machinery of government too complex to comprehend fully and, in consequence, he stresses the 'incompetence of the mass' (1968, p. 107). The other factors concern not the psychology of the followers but of the leaders themselves: 'The apathy of the masses and their need for guidance has as its counterpart in the leaders a natural greed for power' (1968, p. 205). The argument made is that the leaders suffer the psychological effect of having wielded power such that they cannot give it up: '*Le parti c'est moi*' (1968, p. 220). In short, Michels says their vanity is

too strong and he labels this psychological effect of power on leaders as 'Bonapartism.' The term is coined in reference to both Napoleon Bonaparte and Napoleon III, who, Michels (1968, p. 213) argues, viewed their power as resting on popular sovereignty. The other psychological factor that affects leaders Michels (1968, p. 266) terms 'embourgeoisement.' It refers to the effect, particularly strong, he argues, among the leaders of working class parties, of status and financial benefits, which turn the leadership into a separate class with their own special interests: namely, the desire for prestige and for the remunerations of office.

It is reasonable to ask why the membership allows the leadership to get away with it. After all, such psychological needs of leaders do not of themselves add up to the 'strong' leadership supposedly desired by all people. Michels strengthens his argument by maintaining that leaders manage to stay in their leadership positions through employing a number of techniques of concealment and manipulation. They manipulate the party finances, have control over the party press, employ the tactic of threatening to resign, and also engage in what he calls the '*reunion des élites*' (Michels, 1968, p. 182): the playing off of the supporters of one leader against the support for another leader or leaders that leads back to the elite leadership group retaining power.

Alternative Interpretations

There being five leaders of the Conservative Party as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in the years from the beginning of 2016 to the end of 2022 seems to offer an example that fits with both the resignation tactic and the '*reunion des élites*.' It could, however, be argued that rather than the device of playing off one group of supporters against another being used for the elite leaders to retain power, the possibility of playing one group against another actually highlights disagreements within the leadership and is a means, therefore, for refreshing or winning support of members and, thereby, demonstrates the importance of members' support. As such, the contrary argument can be made that use of the device demonstrates, in encouraging debate and offering alternatives, that the leadership acts in a way that is healthy for democracy: even if the top leaders remain the same, policies may be changed. The threat to resign could also be seen in the same

light as being democratic because the tactic engenders support and demonstrates that leaders require that support from members. Furthermore, there is also good reason to think that whether or not using these tactics it would still need political leaders to have regard for the importance of representation.

In representative democracies the leadership of political parties includes members of parliament and, given that politicians need to be re-elected, to stray too far from the promises made at the election would be unwise for the outcome of future elections. A clear example of the consequence of reneging on promises made at the time of the election and the consequent losing of votes and seats in parliament in future elections is that of the Liberal Democrats in the 2010 election in the UK. In that election the Liberal Democrats made a promise to remove the requirement for students to pay university fees. The promise featured prominently in their manifesto and formed a significant part of their campaign. In that election, on that manifesto, the Liberal Democrats had 57 of their candidates elected to parliament, up from 47 seats in the previous election held in 2005 (Griffiths, 2016).

The 2010 election resulted in no party having an overall majority of seats, so the Liberal Democrats joined with the Conservative Party to form a coalition government. In joining that coalition the agreement was reached that, rather than their being ended, student university fees were to be increased nearly threefold, from just over £3,000 to £9,000 a year. After the subsequent election, held in 2015, the number of seats held by Liberal Democrats dropped from 57 seats to only eight seats and the party received less than half of the votes cast in 2010. After that election, the Liberal Democrats ceased to form part of the coalition while the Conservative Party stayed as the government having obtained a majority of seats in Parliament. The longer term consequences of the broken student fees promise continued to show in the 2017 election after which the Liberal Democrats increased their seats in parliament to 12, which was 45 fewer than they had held in 2010 (UK Parliament, no date).

Elections, whether they are general elections, ones held at the local level or simply ones conducted within party organizations and other political associations, provide a crucial device for preventing or overcoming the consequences of the use of leadership tactics. Politicians do need to be re-elected and so, whether seeking power for their own gain, vanity, status,

financial reward, ‘prestige of celebrity’ (Michels, 1968, p. 100) or whatever, they will still need to act in ways serving wider interests than their own in order to get re-elected. Furthermore, the seeking of public profile by a leader may not necessarily be counter to the wider interests of citizens. The benefits could be mutual. Eloquent, popular politicians with a high media profile could be advantageous in bringing attention to interests and policies designed to serve the community. In this way, vanity and the desire to keep power, Bonapartism, could prove useful to the serving of citizens’ interests.

It is also reasonable to question whether in fact politicians do enter public life to serve their own psychological and material interests and to consider whether they would be so corrupted once having become a leader. As Max Weber, a contemporary of Michels, argued in ‘Politics as a Vocation’ some politicians enter politics to pursue ‘ideal’ interests and only some, therefore, for ‘material’ interests (Gerth and Mills, 1991, pp. 77–128). Evidence would need to be produced that even ‘ideal’ politicians, those most committed and supportive of the ideology for which the party was set up to promote, actually are corrupted into using the organization for their own ends.

Ideology Versus Vote-Getting

Michels’ analysis, which draws heavily on examples from European socialist parties, believed that he had proof of the evidence of the iron law of oligarchy in just such a case of Weber’s politicians motivated by ideals: the German Social Democratic Party, *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, the SPD, in the years before the First World War. The SPD was a mass party, that is had a mass membership, was supportive of universal suffrage and was also a strongly ideological party, one with leaders motivated by ideals rather than material interests. As such, theoretically, it should be a case most likely to resist the leadership pursuing its own interests and remaining true to the party’s ideology, as set out in the promises made in its election manifesto. It followed, according to this so-termed ‘critical case’ methodology, that if the iron law of oligarchy could be shown in the case of the SPD, the party where it would be expected least likely to happen, then it applied to all political parties and to all political organizations too.

The German Social Democratic Party was a Marxist party that had formed to further the social and economic interests of workers and the poor and to do so through representation in parliament. Women's suffrage was also, therefore, party policy. Its aims were to become the government in order to further the interests of the masses, rather than those of the rich and powerful, and to raise class consciousness through education. As an internationalist party it was also opposed to war: the slogan 'Workers of the World Unite' appeared on the party's banners. The logic was that workers, having interests in common, could not, therefore, as soldiers, fight in wars against each other. Though a mass party with strong grassroots membership and strong ideology and so, theoretically, a form of party that would be most likely to resist the rise of oligarchy, Michels argued that, in practice, the leadership had become separated from the membership, had detached itself from its ideology and had turned itself into a vote-getting machine.

Michels' evidence for the leadership of the SPD having become separated from the membership included the events at the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart, in 1907, when the party, ideologically internationalist and anti-war, adopted patriotism as a policy (Michels, 1968, pp. 196–197). Indeed, seemingly yet stronger evidence occurred after Michels' work was published when the SPD supported the German government's declaration of war in 1914. Michels also objected to the party's timidity in its unwillingness to support spontaneous strike action and its reluctance to support the idea of a general strike.

A more recent example of the trade-off between ideology and vote-catching is the case of the Labour Party in the UK. Historically, the party was set up to serve the interests of workers –'worker' defined as 'by hand or by brain' in the Party Rule Book, 1917. Nearly eight decades later, faced with the decline in the size of the working class and still intent on promoting workers' interests by becoming the government, it became necessary to widen the support base. In government, it could achieve at least some of those interests, such as a minimum wage and a sufficient budget for universal education to the age of 18; out of office it could not. This was why Clause IV, which referred to 'common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange' in the original Labour Party Rule Book, 1917, adopted into the party's constitution in 1918, and generally interpreted as referring to nationalization, was dropped from the Labour Party Rule Book in 1995 and replaced with a more general

statement about the party's aims and values in accordance with the party's re-positioning for the campaign for 'New Labour' (Labourcounts, no date.)

The outcome of the move to 'New Labour' was a Labour Government with a huge majority in the 1997 election: an election won on an ideologically diluted manifesto. The need to retain wide appeal to voters for future elections, so to fulfil the promises made that would take longer than the election span of five years to achieve, remained. In consequence, the argument could be made that the party was no longer serving the interests of the kinds of radical voters who had played a part in the original setting-up of the party and that the party had made the move from ideology to 'vote-getting.' Following Michels, the implication could then be drawn that the party leadership was serving its own personal interests in their desire to obtain or retain positions of power. It is an accusation that Michels would also have made of the decisions taken by the Liberal Democrats in 2010 when the party joined the coalition with the Conservative Party and reneged on their promise to abolish university student fees.

An alternative interpretation of New Labour and the 1997 election, however, is possible. It would argue that the party had adapted in order to form a government that could, in practice at least, best serve a good proportion of the interests of the workers and, in addition, the broader interests of the electorate, too. Lacking a majority of seats for any party in the 2010 election, the Liberal Democrats, too, might make such justification for joining a coalition and view the sacrifice of their student fee policy as a necessary compromise in the interests of the wider electorate.

The Problems Faced by Democracy

The example of 'New Labour' not only illustrates the ideology versus vote-getting debate but also the wider set of problems that representative democracies face. Not only may practice and ideology not always match because of the need to win elections where the proportion of those in the electorate attracted by the purer ideology is insufficient in number to get the party elected, but also the question must need to be faced by governments once elected as to whose interests they are actually supposed to represent. One argument is that parties must represent their members. They, after all, are the ones who finance their parties through subscriptions and donations

and who do the footwork of delivering leaflets and knocking on doors in campaigning. But such a line of thinking about parties representing their members does not chime with the idea of a party being set up to serve the interests of a wider group: in the example case of the Labour Party, the working class as a whole. But this line of thinking about parties needing to represent the interests of the group for which it was originally set up is then open to the challenge that it cannot serve only the interests of the group for whose interests the party was originally formed but must serve those who supported it in the election. Those people, that is, who voted for the promises made in the party programme set out in the manifesto.

The interests of party members and those who vote for a party, then, are not necessarily the same but even if they were there is yet a further candidate for whose interests the party, once in power, must serve. The role of government is not only to serve the interests of those who voted them into power. In a democracy, the role of government is to serve the interests of the 'community': of the country's population as a whole, that is, including those who expressly voted against them. It is a tall order, for, not only does not everyone vote for the same party and, therefore, its party programme but also, even when voting for the same party, not everyone's reasons for voting for that party will be the same.

The relative strength of views on the issues highlighted by a party in their manifesto may differ between voters for that party and on some issues interests may even be directly opposed: the choice of party itself being a compromise as the one closest to each citizen's own set of interests – interests that may, of course, also include non-selfish consideration of others' best interests. This raises questions about the role of manifestos and the importance of implementing the policies promised in manifestos. It may be more 'democratic' in the sense of representing the population as a whole not to deliver on all of the promises made or to do so but in a weakened form. In the example of the German Social Democratic Party, the SPD, the interests of the 'community' may have played an important part in the decision to opt for patriotism in 1907 and support for war in 1914. In the case of the Liberal Democrats in the UK it may have seemed preferable to allocate the portion of the budget promised to students more widely through the population. It is, though, more difficult to follow this possibility through to the decision to introduce a near threefold increase in students' university fees and it may have been the size of the increase rather than the pragmatic

decision not to fulfil its manifesto promise to end university fees that upset voters so much in the two elections that followed the one held in 2010.

The attempt by any government to achieve a balance between delivering on promises made while at the same time accommodating the interests of those who voted for other parties is no easy task. Again, the view ascribed to Abraham Lincoln that you can please some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time but you cannot please all of the people all of the time comes to mind. This is a reminder of one of the reasons, and a very important one, for the holding of elections. When the 'some' who are pleased with the government becomes too small, an opportunity to gain the votes of a larger 'some' needs to be provided. This is why regular elections, involving competition between political parties with clear manifestos, serve an essential and valuable service in representative democracies.

Weighing Evidence

That political parties adapt their original ideologies in order to gain votes with the aim of forming the next government and that governments do not achieve all that they promise are each inherent aspects of representative democracy. Evidence that such things take place, therefore, constitutes proof neither that in political organizations leaders become separated from the masses nor that the leaders develop a psychological need for power. It follows, of course, that such evidence does not disprove the claims either.

Nevertheless, in line with Michels' argument about embourgeoisement, it is fair to allow that there are plenty of examples of political party leaders personally benefitting from, some might say 'exploiting,' their position after leaving office. The lucrative biography deals, consultancy posts, lecture tours and new career posts taken up by some government ministers after leaving office are too many to mention and, so, to select a few as illustration from so many would risk accusations of bias in choosing. But there are counter examples to Michels' claims about Bonapartism to be found in cases of leaders who, while in power, have voluntarily chosen to leave office or not to seek re-election. Such examples include Lyndon B. Johnson who in March 1968 made the shock announcement that he would

neither seek re-election as president nor accept his party's nomination, Harold Wilson who resigned as prime minister of the United Kingdom in 1976, Jacinda Ardern who resigned as prime minister of New Zealand in 2023 and Leo Varadkar who resigned as Taoiseach of Ireland and leader of the Fine Gael Party in 2024. In the latter three cases the resignations were explained in personal terms of no longer feeling able to carry on with the adequacy demanded of their premiership role. As Leo Varadkar expressed it in his resignation speech: 'I am no longer the best person for that job … politicians are human beings. We have our limitations. We give it everything until we can't anymore and then we have to move on' (Henegan, 2024).

Of course, examples, whether in support of Michels or running counter to his arguments amount to no more than anecdotal evidence when what is needed is scientific psychological evidence on the effects of leadership. But it remains questionable whether all leaders would seek to use their position to further their own interests, especially those most strongly motivated by ideals and intent on giving service not only to their supporters but also to the wider electorate. Furthermore, as argued, even when politicians do use their position to benefit their own interests, whether driven by vanity or the search for pecuniary rewards, the benefits may still be mutual. Enjoyment in being a public personality, lauded by supporters, could help not only to publicize interests but also to work to advantage in gaining support for legislation or in achieving the party's re-election over other parties antagonistic towards those interests.

Safeguards for the Limitation and Control of Power

It is reasonable to ask how, if they so choose, leaders of mass parties are able to get away with using the organization to separate the leadership such that they can further their own interests. This is why it is Michels' claims about the manipulation of party finances and control of the party press that are tactics so threatening to democracy. In combination they offer the means not simply to represent interests but to manipulate and manufacture opinion such that the 'interests' represented are those that benefit the leadership.

But safeguards against this can be found and the most important is for the membership of parties and the electorate as a whole to be able to receive information from not just one but from a variety of sources. This is one of the many reasons why universal education and a free press and freedom of information are so important for a representative democracy to flourish. And it is also one of the reasons why more than one party competing in elections and there being the freedom and organizational capabilities to start up new parties are also important: indeed, not just parties but also interest groups, pressure groups and associations of many different kinds. Multiple sources of information and of opinion provide the strongest defence against the manipulation of any party's press.

The wider society solutions of multiple sources of information, multiple parties and multiple voluntary associations are not, however, the only means for combatting the rise and consolidation of oligarchy within a political party. It may be possible to set up rules and devices within a political party: rules and devices designed to prevent the formation of oligarchy. One example is of leaders being elected by popular vote rather than by selection being made by an inner group. Another might be regular rotation of the leaders, as practised by the Green Party. Yet another might be measures to ensure the strength of local branches in decision-making.

Ensuring open consultation on issues and encouraging open debates rather than conducting disagreements away from the public gaze could, furthermore, play a role in reducing the chances of oligarchy forming. The difficulty with opening out to the public gaze, however, is that parties can be made to seem unelectable because of internal squabbles. Rotation of leadership can also bring problems of continuity and, if Michels is right that the public does like strong leadership, the voting public may be discouraged by such regular turnovers of personalities; in turn, that could work to the detriment of the party. It needs, perhaps, to be recognized that in the practice of representative democracy there may be some trade-off between democratic organization and effective organization.

Oligarchy is, then, a tendency in political parties and organizations that needs to be avoided by the right kinds of safeguards being in place both within parties and organizations and also in society more widely. Among these safeguards are possibilities for forming new political organizations including by splitting off from existing organizations. There also needs to be access to alternative unbiased information in society and it needs to be a

society where citizens are encouraged to participate and where they have sufficient capabilities and opportunities to do so. It is notable that these are the same kinds of arguments made in respect of bureaucracy and also those generated through consideration of the 2016 referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union.

Conclusion

To avoid organizational and psychological factors within political parties and other political organizations that can lead to the separation of leaders such that they represent their own interests over those of their members, their voters and the wider community, safeguards must be in place. Elections, both general and local, as well as within political organizations, play an important role in safeguarding against leadership tactics to use the organization to serve their own personal interests. This is yet another reason why regular elections involving competition between political parties with clear manifestos serve an essential and valuable service in representative democracies.

Multiple sources of information and of opinion provide the strongest defence against the manipulation of any party's press. This is one of the many reasons why universal education and a free press and freedom of information are so important for a flourishing representative democracy. And it is also one of the reasons why more than one party competing in elections and their being the freedom and organizational capabilities to start up new parties are important: indeed, not just parties but also interest groups and associations of many different kinds.

Not all politicians and leaders of political organizations, however, seek power for material gains or other forms of personal gratification. Some seek to fulfil the interests of those they were elected to represent. Even when a politician does use their position to benefit their own interests, whether driven by vanity or the search for material rewards, the benefits for the politician and citizens can still be mutual.

Political parties that form governments in representative democracies must serve not just the members of their party, nor even only those who elected them into power, but must serve the best interests of the community

as a whole. Representatives are not simply delegates. In practice, therefore, there will be some trade-off between ideology and vote-getting for political parties may need to adapt their original ideologies in order to gain votes with the aim of forming the next government so to fulfil some, at least, of their ideal and promised policies. And, while in government, they must also serve the interests of those who do not vote for them, too. That governments do not achieve all that they promise is, therefore, an inherent aspect of representative democracy.

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10
POWER ELITE

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Problems faced by governments in representative democracies to represent the interests of citizens and of the community as a whole come not only from political organizations, party leaders and the bureaucracy, they also come from the fundamental problem of citizens being hampered in both independently forming their own opinions and independently forming clear awareness of their interests.

In *The Power Elite*, published in 1956, C. Wright Mills contended that the structure of power in America in the 1950s was that of a power elite over an emerging mass society in which citizens no longer played the active part in politics they once had. Instead of forming their own opinions, expressing them and having them taken into account, Mills argued that citizens received opinions as a consequence of distraction by the mass media of communication and that the elite – the 'power elite' – was able to turn the political system to serve its own interests rather than the interests of the mass of citizens, for which purpose the system of representative democracy had been intended.

The Power Elite

The power elite that Mills (1956, p. 4) identified consisted of the leaders of the 'major hierarchies and organizations' in the economy, in the military and in politics: 'the political directorate, the corporate rich, and the

ascendant military have come together as the power elite' (Mills, 1956, p. 296). Crucially, given that the power elite consisted of those at the top of 'big business,' the military and not just top politicians, it followed that the business and military members of the power elite were unelected. Not only that, Mills also argued that the political part of the power elite also included the non-elected. Along with the higher politicians (President, Vice President and members of the cabinet) he included officials such as the White House staff and heads of bureaus and commissions (Mills, 1956, p. 231). Furthermore, Mills argued that it was not the top elected politicians who had the most power within the power elite, for interaction within it enabled the leaders of big business and, increasingly, of the military to make decisions of wide-ranging consequence. Sometimes their not making decisions had even greater consequence (Mills, 1956, p. 4). These issues of such consequence he classified, in summary, as those concerned with 'war and peace' and those concerned with 'slump and poverty' (Mills, 1958, p. 31). If Mills is right and the non-elected have more power than the elected then, clearly, the label of 'democracy' is seriously open to question.

The power elite is bound together, Mills argued, through their lifestyle, their social relations, their social origins, their religion and their social experiences. They spend their time together, 'intermingling,' and they intermarry; they also not only have similar social origins but similar educations too. Notably, they went to the Ivy League colleges, all of which are situated in the north east region of America and all but one of them founded when America was an English colony. The power elite's unity, he argued, was not only social but also psychological. They were bound together through their similar interests, which concerned the desire for power and prestige. Furthermore, the recognition of their interests ensured their mutual cooperation. The members of this elite-group have, more loosely, been described as WASPS: white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans.

The Advance of Technology, the Media and the Mass Society

Mills laid blame for this undemocratic development of a power elite and emerging mass society on the advance of technology in industrial society. Whereas once society had been made up of small businesses and farms, industrialization had led to the growth of larger and larger factories, enterprises and corporations including on an international scale. The view of America in earlier times, in which opinions were independently formed – 'the public of public opinion' (Mills, 1956, p. 299) of classic democracy – and acted upon, he recognizes as somewhat idealized but he argues that today the public has been turned, though not yet completely, into a mass society. His argument rested not on comparisons with the past but on the concentration of power in the hands of those at the top of the hierarchies of the vast economic organizations, the greatly expanded military and the centralized political executive present in the industrial society of the 1950s and the advance of technology in providing the means for the media of communication to be used by the power elite for manipulation and distraction of the mass of the people. These transformations had sapped the vibrancy of local politics.

> [T]he media, as now organized and operated, are even more than a major cause of the transformation of America into a mass society. They are also among the most important of those increased means of power now at the disposal of elites of wealth and power; moreover, some of the higher agents of these media are themselves either among the elites or very important among their servants.
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> *C. Wright Mills,* The Power Elite, *1956, p. 315*

Between the elite and mass Mills (1956, p. 245) argued that there was, what he called, 'the middle levels of power' in which he included the vast majority of politicians in the Congress and the plurality of pressure groups. These, he argued did not participate in those key decisions of national and international importance with which the members of the power elite were involved and contended that the balance of powers, so central to the American Constitution, no longer held true. (For the full discussion see Mills, 1956, pp. 245–264.)

The Bureaucracy

Together with the growth of industrialization which had both enabled this enlargement of corporations and organizations and the centralization of power at the top of 'big business,' the military and the political executive and the media of distraction, Mills (1956, p. 237) also pointed blame for the undermining of American democracy at the US bureaucracy for not acting as a 'genuine bureaucracy.' A genuine bureaucracy he described as one that was much like Weber's ideal-type: hierarchical, with each rank having more authority and a more specialized role than the one below, and a career structure that was salaried with promotion based on examinations and the acquiring of expertise within the organization. Crucially, the bureaucrats in a genuine bureaucracy would administer policies objectively. Like Weber (1991), Mills argued that such a bureaucracy would be the most efficient. Like Weber, too, Mills recognized the problems of bureaucracy becoming cumbersome and, as he put it 'snarled with procedure, rather than an instrument of policy' (Mills, 1956, p. 236). His solution to the problem was the preservation of the bureaucracy's integrity and above all of its neutrality. As he argued:

> The integrity of a bureaucracy as a unit of a government depends upon whether or not, as a corps of officials, it survives changes of political administration.
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> *C. Wright Mills,* The Power Elite, *1956, p. 236*

In the US system, unlike in the UK Civil Service, the state bureaucracy changes with each administration, with people being appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. It was the lack of a neutral bureaucracy, one made up of expert administrators who carry out their duties objectively, without party pressure, for whichever government is elected, Mills argued, that had played a crucial role in enabling the rise of key unelected officials into the political executive. Not only, in line with Weber's prediction, had the bureaucracy burgeoned in size but expansion had included large numbers of 'key officials' appointed from outside the bureaucracy. Mills (1956, p. 238) noted that in 1948 only 32 percent of the key officials, 502 in number, had gained their appointments through a career within the bureaucracy. Furthermore, he also noted that many of the

key officials had gained their university degrees from the Ivy League colleges: appointments, therefore, that fitted with the social and also psychological unity of the power elite.

Following the 2024 Presidential Election the significance of the political appointment of key officials was brought to especial prominence by appointments judged in the media as highly controversial, some of whom having had no former experience in government. For example, the choice for defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, had been a Fox News host and Scott Bessent, chosen for the treasury, is a billionaire hedge fund manager. The appointment of Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy to the Department of Government Efficiency, Doge, was particularly notable. Not only are both billionaires and entirely from outside politics with, therefore, no experience of running or even working within a government department but, also, Doge is newly created and without the approval of Congress and, so, the co-heads are outside the cabinet and not, therefore, subject to confirmation by the US Senate. (For the above see Smith, 2024).

Evaluation

A similar argument to that made by Mills about social origins, Ivy League colleges, intermixing and holding high positions in politics and business is popular in the UK in respect of the Eton and ‘Oxbridge’ ‘old boys network’ and wealth. Observations about the similar social and educational backgrounds within the higher ranks of the British Civil Service have also been drawn into the argument. Unlike the US bureaucracy, however, the civil service is permanent and neither changes each time a government is elected (though governments do appoint special advisers from outside the civil service), nor has ‘key officials’ appointed from outside the civil service’s career structure. It is also difficult to make a parallel case for the UK in respect of the military being part of a power elite. The importance of the military was particularly significant in America in the 1950s: a time not only post-World War II but also a time that includes years when America was fighting in the Korean War. America in the 1950s was also unusual in having a president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had served as a general in the army in the Second World War.

The evidence offered by C. Wright Mills in support of there being a power elite in 1950s America, though historically grounded, was impressionistic rather than scientific. He noted the people who played golf with President Eisenhower and those who attended dinners with the president: top politicians, top businessmen and those at the top of the military, but very rarely anyone from the middle levels of power. Mills also noted the super-rich families that made large donations to the political parties: as examples, the Rockefellers, the du Ponts, the Mellons and the Vanderbilts to the Republican Party; the Wade Thompsons, the Kennedys and the Marshall Fields to the Democratic Party (Mills, 1956, pp. 166–167).

Mills also noted the ease of movement between the three groups – business, military, political – within the power elite. It would have been no surprise to him that the Kennedys listed among those in the business elite would later have one of the Kennedys, John F. Kennedy, elected president – and that his younger brother, Robert, would later become a candidate for the presidency. It is also unlikely that Mills would have been surprised by the rather more recent example of a top businessman, Donald Trump, becoming president, who when campaigning for election in 2016 pointedly made much of his advantages in having a lack of political experience but notable business successes and had become well-known to the public through his regular role as host in the reality television programme *The Apprentice*.

General Eisenhower being president at the time that Mills was writing was, certainly, a clear example of the importance of the military in politics. In support of there being a power elite and of the ease of movement between the three groups that made up the power elite, Mills (1956, p. 214) also gave examples of other top army generals who, on their retirement from the military, became the heads of big business corporations. Among the many examples were General Lucius D. Clay who became chairman of the Continental Can Company, General James H. Doolittle who became vice-president of Shell Oil and General Douglas MacArthur who became chairman of the board at Remington Rand Inc.

Though it was true that the same top military and top businessmen kept appearing as Eisenhower's close associates, far outweighing the attendance of local politicians at dinners attended by the president, and also true that the richest business families donated very large sums to either the Republican or the Democrat parties, such observations can be questioned as evidence for Mills' theory. Though consistent with the possibility that the

people who held real power were the unelected and overwhelmingly so, it constituted evidence only of potential power and not that the power was actually being exercised by the non-elected sections of the power elite. Having been a general in the army it was, after all, unsurprising that Eisenhower would have army friends and that he might play golf with them and invite them to dine with him. Such meetings may simply have been occasions for reminiscing about battles in the Second World War and for chatting about their old buddies and discussing golf shots. Again, the fact that rich families donate to political parties and attend dinners with the president, though certainly suspect, amounts only to circumstantial evidence of their exercising power through ensuring that their interests were being served in place of those of the mass of citizens. They may at those dinners and social gatherings, after all, only have been discussing future and past weddings or past times when they were university students at one of the Ivy League colleges.

Given Mills' view of power – being that it was concerned with the making of decisions of 'national and international importance,' decisions concerning the issues of 'war and peace' and 'slump and poverty' – it is also no surprise that attention would be drawn to the power of the military and to that of central but not local government.

The Middle Levels of Power

Issues other than those of national and international importance might well count as being of more importance to voters and much, perhaps even most, of the time. De Tocqueville argued that, in the 1830s, it was not national politics but working together on local issues that was the most relevant to democracy in America.

> The general affairs of a country engage the attention only of leading politicians, who assemble from time to time in the same places; and as they often lose sight of each other afterwards, no lasting ties are established between them. But if the object be to have the local affairs of a district conducted by the men who reside there, the same persons are always in contact, and they are, in a manner, forced to be acquainted and to adapt themselves to one another.

Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Volume Two, *1998 (1840), pp. 211–212*

If C. Wright Mills is right with respect to the second half of the twentieth century, however, rather than the leading politicians being people who 'often lose sight of each other,' as de Tocqueville argues, on the contrary, those top politicians socialize, their families intermarry, they attend the same elite colleges and, it would seem, more or less spend their time exclusively together. Furthermore, if Mills is right, de Tocqueville's findings in the 1830s no longer hold in the 1950s because voters are distracted by the media and so holding not their own freely formed opinions but, rather, opinions adopted from the media: received opinions. Agreements so reached, therefore, may reflect not the important capacity to act democratically but the sameness of received positions on political issues, including at the local level of politics.

Evidence gathered only a few years after the publication of Mills' *The Power Elite*, proved consistent with his concerns about political participation. In *The Civic Culture*, published in 1963, Almond and Verba recorded that of their survey of American adults 43 percent did not belong to a single voluntary organization (Almond and Verba, 1963, p. 247) and only around one quarter of the survey respondents were involved in any voluntary organization which they viewed as political (Almond and Verba, 1963, pp. 250–251).

Evidence to support Mills' concerns about participation was also to be found in the statistics on voting in elections. The turnout of eligible voters in the 1950s was low as compared with the century before. For example, in the years 1848 to 1858 the turnout of eligible voters ranged between 69.5 percent to 79.4 percent in presidential elections and 60.5 percent to 69.1 percent in midterm elections; in the years 1948 to 1958, however, the turnout of those eligible to vote had fallen sharply and ranged between 52.2 percent to 60.2 percent in presidential elections and 43.5 percent to 45 percent in midterm elections (Statista, no date).

In the decades that have followed the publication of Mills' *Power Elite*, turnout has remained similar to those from 1948 to 1958. In the years from 1958 to 2022 turnout of voters in presidential elections has ranged between 51.7 percent (in 1996) and 66.2 percent (in 2022); in midterm elections it ranged between 36.7 percent (in 2014) and 48.7 percent (in 1966) (Statista,

no date). In the 2024 presidential election turnout fell back a little to 63.7 percent (Ballotpedia, no date).

Defining and Measuring Power

For challenging the reality of democracy in America, that Mills' argument brought criticism was unsurprising; objections to the lack of scientific method in the impressionistic evidence he offered, however, had the positive effect of stimulating new social scientific studies into the exercise and distribution of power and influence. Mills (1956, p. 9) had defined 'the powerful' as 'those who are able to realize their will, even if others resist.' Robert Dahl (1957, 1958) proposed a similar definition but one that was measurable and concerned with actual behaviour and with respect to 'key' issues, defined in terms of there being actual disagreement: 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' (Dahl, 1957, pp. 202–203).

In *Who Governs*?, first published in 1961, Dahl and his team of researchers studied the case of the city of New Haven, Connecticut. They scoured historical documents and statistical sources, carried out in-depth interviews of those in leadership positions in business and politics and conducted random sample surveys of registered voters. The research focused on the 'issue-areas' of public education, urban redevelopment and nominations for local office. Analysis of the findings found strong evidence for democracy flourishing with influence spread out rather than power concentrated in the hands of a few. Findings in line, therefore, with the assessment that de Tocqueville had made more than a century earlier rather than Mills' power elite view of America in the 1950s.

Dahl's (2005 [1961]) research findings though producing evidence that contradicted Mills' claims about the concentration of power, were, in being local to New Haven, relevant only in relation to Mills' 'middle level of power' rather than the 'power elite' and, as Dahl made clear, were concerned with the distribution and patterns of what he consistently described not as 'power' but as 'influence.' Bachrach and Baratz (1970), who, unlike Dahl, drew clear distinction between power and influence, argued that Dahl's measurable definition of power in terms of its being

exercised by one actor over another missed an important aspect of power. This 'other face of power,' as they called it, was the power to stop issues getting into the arena of public debate in the first place. If not in the arena of debate then, clearly, it could neither be observed nor be measured. Keeping the issue out of debate could, though, be of great benefit to the power elite's interest. It could also bias findings towards the importance of pluralistic influence.

Employing a term coined by Schattschneider in *The Semi-Sovereign People* (1960, p. 71) Bachrach and Baratz (1970, p. 43) argued that political systems, both at the national and the local level, developed a 'mobilization of bias,' which they defined as 'a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures ("rules of the game") that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others.' The main way in which this mobilization of bias operates in order to benefit those persons and groups to the detriment of others is through what they termed 'nondecisions,' which, crucially, restricted both what appeared on the agenda and the terms of the debate. While not confirming the importance of the mass media of distraction it was a finding more in line with Mills than with Dahl, and Mills was to find further support from later research.

Focusing more directly on Mills' power elite, though shifting attention away from the military, Domhoff, in *Who Rules America Now?*, first published in 1983, investigated the networks between, what he referred to as, the 'social upper class' and those in leadership positions in the large corporations, political parties and the national government. The members of this 'social upper class' were classified as those listed in social directories, in their attendance at certain private schools and in their membership of certain social clubs. Domhoff (1983, p. 77) found that, in consequence of their origins, financing and, most especially, their disproportionate high representation on the boards of directors, they combined ownership and control of large corporations very much in line with Mills' conception of the 'corporate rich.' He also found members of the social upper class to be disproportionately represented in government at national levels and that the social upper class dominated the political parties through their campaign financing. Crucially, also in line with Mills' position, Domhoff found that when the power elite sought to push their special interests, for example in

favour of family or business, through lobbyists, company lawyers, political action committees and so on, they usually won.

Later Developments

The development of media technology since Mills' time – the Internet in the 1960s, mobile phones in the 1970s, the World Wide Web in the 1990s and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (now X) more recently – has the potential to enhance representative democracy through being used to encourage debate and to develop interest and participation in politics. In practice, however, as more recent events in US presidential elections have shown, such technology can also be used to encourage not cooperation and compromise but to reinforce divisions between groups and to encourage conflict. It is notable, furthermore, that in his Farewell Address, President Biden, the outgoing president, warned of the 'tech-industrial complex' (Gedeon, 2025). The notion of a 'military-industrial complex' to which Biden was making implicit reference, had long been applied to the United States. The appointment, even though short-lived, of Elon Musk, the owner of X, as joint head of Doge by the incoming president, Donald Trump, is a glaring example.

Depriving citizens of full and unbiased information on which to formulate their interests remains a serious risk for democracy's goal of serving citizens' interests and those of the community as a whole. The media now has not only the capacity to distract it also has the potential to be used for propaganda and the promotion of conspiracy theories with the true story depicted as 'fake news.' A well-documented example, carried out by the House Select Committee, is that of Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the House of Representatives, and his appearances on Fox News to claim the 2020 US election had been 'stolen' by the Democratic Party. He continued to do so in following years in spite not simply of the absence of supporting evidence but in the presence of substantial evidence to the contrary (Slisco, 2022). Television channels, newspapers and other forms of media communication may choose to select information and cover topics that are likely to retain their viewers or subscribers and, thereby, increase their profits from sales and advertising. These media may, for example,

also, choose to employ the device of having celebrity gossip take precedence over political reporting.

Mass media, nevertheless, remains a valuable means in representative democracy for conveying information and with effect, as the example of the US civil rights movement and television coverage of police behaviour towards peaceful protest showed. Not least of the examples was that of the brutal police attack on the civil rights demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama, in the spring of 1963. Lasting for days the events were witnessed and highlighted in the media and led to the Civil Rights Act being signed into law, in 1964, by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The case, furthermore, also showed that the media could be used by activists. Knowing that the march would be reported on news broadcasts, Martin Luther King had chosen to stage the demonstration in Birmingham because it was among the most racially segregated cities in the USA, known both for having a very violent Ku Klux Klan and a notoriously brutal police force. He also, therefore, sought to show that that the demonstration had been organized to be peaceful. It was to that end that the march had been formed with children at the front.

The importance of television and videos filmed on citizens' mobile phones also played an important part in drawing attention to the police brutality used against Rodney King and Eric Garner, the murder of Trayvon Martin, and the fatal shooting of Michael Brown Jr. The case of Trayvon Martin sparked the beginning of the Black Lives Matter slogan, whereas those of Eric Garner and Michael Brown Jr. led to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2014. The murder of George Floyd, in May 2020, by a police officer, and the event recorded on camera with the video quickly transmitted around the world, led to the nationwide movement becoming worldwide.

The advantages of modern media of communication and of modern technology do not, therefore, only go one way. The media, including now the internet and devices such as mobile phones, can, as Mills theorized, be used for distraction and can also be used for the transmission of misinformation. Modern technology can, however, also be used by pressure groups to convey information that challenges the dominant view and, not least, can be used to generate and coordinate action.

Conclusion

In a representative democracy, power to make political decisions must belong to those elected and not the non-elected, such as those at the top of large business corporations, the military and the bureaucracy. The workings of representative democracy to represent the interests of citizens faces problems when there is unequal distribution of wealth with a very wide gap between the very wealthy and ordinary citizens. Representative democracy also faces problems when there are inequalities in advantageous social contacts.

A civil service-type bureaucracy that is neutral, remaining in place with each change of government, is necessary for power to remain located within the pool of those elected. The mass media, which can be of great service in representative democracies as sources of information and as a means to encourage and organize participation, also, however, poses the threat to democracy of distracting citizens from having interest in politics and, of even greater concern, of leading them to develop received opinions rather than those independently formed.

Modern media technology can be a threat to democracy in being used for 'fake news' but it can also be used by citizens to serve the purpose of conveying alternative sources of information and enabling cooperation and coordination. Modern media and technology can then be used to encourage the taking of collective action and to assist in its organization, as, for example, in the case of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Active participation including that organized collectively is needed not only at the middle levels of power but also at the lower, 'mass' level of society for representative democracy to thrive.

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11
DOMINANT CLASS

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The argument, made by C. Wright Mills (1956), that the practice of democracy is under threat when there is unequal distribution both of wealth and of advantageous social contacts, and is of the greatest threat where there are very large business corporations and where the leadership of government and business interact both politically and socially (and also with the military), has parallels with the criticisms made by Karl Marx of what he termed 'bourgeois democracy.' Marx's theory, however, differs from Mills' power elite theory in important ways. Rather than focusing on elite control of power by big business, the military and political executive, Marx argued that the state – which includes not just the government but also the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the laws, the police and the military – operates in the interests of the owners of the means of production.

Ownership of Private Property and Class Conflict of Interests

In capitalist society ownership – ownership of private property – and not Mills' emphasis on control of big business in 'industrial society' through share-ownership and membership of managerial boards, was what was crucial for Marx. In Marx's capitalist society it was the ownership of capital – factories, banks, houses and other properties such as ships and warehouses for rent – versus non-ownership that divided society not into

Mills' elite and mass divide but into classes: capitalists/'bourgeoisie' and workers/'proletariat.' And, crucially, in Marx's analysis, ownership of private property put the two classes in a direct conflict of interests.[1]

The direct conflict of interests between the classes, Marx argued, followed from those of capitalists being to maximize profits and, in order to achieve this, keeping workers' wages as low as possible while keeping them working for as many hours as possible. In contrast, as the Chartist and 1905 Russian petitions made clear, the interests of workers are to have wages as high as possible along with shorter working days, acceptable conditions of work and protection (insurance) when unable to work as a consequence of sickness, old age and incapacity of any kind. The tragedy of this direct conflict of interests between the classes was amply illustrated in the Chartists' petitions and most fully expressed in that of 1842.

> [Y]our petitioners would direct the attention of your honourable House to the great disparity existing between the wages of the producing millions, and the salaries of those whose comparative usefulness ought to be questioned, where riches and luxury prevail amongst the rulers, and poverty and starvation amongst the ruled.
>
> …
>
> [Y]our petitioners complain that the hours of labour, particularly of the factory workers, are protracted beyond the limits of human endurance, and that the wages earned, after unnatural application to toil in heated and unhealthy workshops, are inadequate to sustain the bodily strength, and supply those comforts which are so imperative after an excessive waste of physical energy.
>
> [Y]our petitioners also direct the attention of your honourable House to the starvation wages of the agricultural labourer, and view with horror and indignation the paltry income of those whose toil gives being to the staple food of this people.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

The tragedy of the direct conflict of interests between the classes was also starkly illustrated by the Russian workers in their 1905 petition. Declaring 'we are oppressed, overburdened with excessive toil, contemptuously treated' and explaining their decision to strike being because their first

request, namely to discuss their needs with their employers, had been denied on the grounds that they had no right in law for such discussion, the Russian petition had then repeated these unlawful requests:

> [T]he reduction of the working day to eight hours; our mutual participation in determining the rates for our work and in the settlement of grievances that might arise between us and the lower managerial staff; to raise the minimum daily wages for unskilled workers and for women as well, to one ruble; to abolish overtime work; to give our sick better medical attention without insults; and to arrange our workshops so that we might work there without encountering death from murderous drafts, rain, and snow.
>
> *Russian Petition 1905*

Bourgeois Democracy

Representative democracy, the system of government in capitalist society was, for Marx, 'bourgeois democracy': government that represented the interests of the owners of capital.

> [T]he bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.
>
> *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels,* Manifesto of the Communist Party, *1968 (1848), p. 37*

In Marx's analysis, in capitalist society, the state has two functions both of which serve to maintain the bourgeoisie's hold on power: the protection of private property and the regulation of workers' struggle.

> At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class antagonism between capital and labour, the State power assumed more and more the character of the national

> power of capital over labour, of a public force organised for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism.
>
> *Karl Marx, The Civil War in France, 1968, p. 285*

The first function of the bourgeois state, the protection of private property, is in order to ensure maximum profits. So, the property owned by capitalists (factories, banks, houses, ships, land and so on) must be protected by the state through laws, police, judiciary and prisons. Precisely in line with Marx's analysis of the relationship between political and economic power, though pre-dating his works, the 1842 Chartist Petition also stated:

> [Y]our petitioners complain that possession of property is made the test of men's qualification to sit in parliament.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

The second function of the state in capitalist society, so to keep the bourgeoisie in power in order to serve their interests, is the regulation of the workers' struggle. This is done by providing enough (but only just enough and no more) of their demands together with sufficient coercive forces to prevent them from rising up against the capitalist system in such a way, in the extreme, as to overthrow the political and economic system in revolution. This leads to the interpretation of the fulfilment, over time, of the demands made in the Chartist petitions as being not to improve representation but to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie in keeping them in power.

In the light of the potential threat to the bourgeoisie's power and property that the large Chartist gatherings and meetings posed, it is unsurprising that, during the Chartist years, the Metropolitan Police became more professional and more efficient; effective means of disturbance prevention were developed and practised; and the police force were deployed in areas outside of London, including in the North, where the existing 'machinery of public order' in those other areas also developed such as to be more efficient in keeping order (Mather, 1959). It is why the 1842 Chartist Petition made complaint of the 'unconstitutional police force.' The petition also complained about the 'vast and unconstitutional army' that is 'upheld at the public expense, for the purpose of repressing

public opinion' and 'to intimidate the millions in the due exercise of those rights and privileges which ought to belong to them.'

In bourgeois/capitalist society, in Marx's analysis, the state puts the interests of one class (the ownership class) over others and is, therefore, inherently coercive. In bourgeois democracy, the government does not serve the interests of the whole population and, so, suffrage is restricted. In Marx's analysis of the state, the bureaucracy is not neutral but works to the benefit of the ownership class; the police and the judicial and prison systems regulate workers not owners. This was why the 1842 Chartist petitioners complained of the treatment, including that of 'packed juries;' of the '500 well disposed persons' arrested when carrying out their right of peaceful protest; made reference to 'the partiality shown to the aristocracy in the courts of justice, to the cruelty of that system of law in the trial of the Chartists Frost, Williams and Jones; and not only made complaints about the police force but drew the connection between the coercive nature of the state and the Poor Law:

> [Your petitioners complain] That an unconstitutional police force is distributed all over the country, at enormous cost, to prevent the due exercise of the people's rights. And your petitioners are of opinion that the Poor-law Bastiles and the police stations, being co-existent, have originated from the same cause, *viz*., the increased desire on the part of the irresponsible few to oppress and starve the many.
>
> *Chartist Petition, 1842*

In essence, the Chartists, even though petitioning for representative democracy and their inclusion within it, were engaging in a Marxist analysis six years before the publication, in 1848, of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Communist Manifesto*.

Marx's Evidence

In contrast to Mills' power elite analysis, the evidence deployed in Marx's class conflict analysis is not that of who are in high positions (for example, those who attended Eton and Oxbridge in the UK or Ivy League colleges, in the case of the US) but that of whose interests are being served by the state.

Interests can be seen in the laws passed by government and in the treatment by the state of the rich as opposed to the poor. In this light the harshness of the sentences received by the leaders of the Newport Rising of 1839, who, though violence had resulted, had planned only for marches to meet for an intended unarmed protest demonstration, is readily understood. Today, the evidence to be found is, for example, in the relatively harsh treatment of petty thieves as compared with the owners of private firms that engage in large-scale fraud. Such evidence is also to be found in the example of the relatively harsh treatment of environmental protesters as opposed the owners of private property whose farms and industries pollute the land and rivers.

In respect of legislation in Britain from 1833 to 1864, Marx (1974 [1867], pp. 283–305), in *Capital, Volume I*, produces strong evidence not only of how capitalists exploited their workers but also of how the Factory Acts protected factory owners' profits. He also gives evidence of every one of the Acts that aimed to improve workers' conditions having been fought against by the factory owners.

The Factory Acts, which initially focused on improving the working conditions of children and later also included improving working conditions for women, concerned such things as limiting the daily work hours or requiring eating breaks. An example of how the Acts protected capitalists' profits is that of the 1833 Factory Act which reduced children's working hours but which established a 'system of relays' in order to ensure 'the freedom of labour' of adults (Marx, 1974 [1867], p. 285). The system of relays had one set of children working from 5:30 in the morning until 1:30 in the afternoon and a second set working from 1:30 in the afternoon until 8:30 in the evening. By this means the 15 hour working day of adults could be maintained.

Employers also circumvented and fought the Acts. One example that Marx gives is of the exploitation of the loophole in the Factory Act of 1844 that mentioned morning breaks but failed to mention one in the afternoon (Marx, 1974 [1867], p. 293). Another was the reduction in wages that was the reaction to the Factory Act of 1847, which limited the working day to 10 hours (Marx, 1974 [1867], pp. 290–291). The reduction, 10 percent at first and soon growing to 25 percent or more, was in order to make workers work longer hours, from necessity, through the addition of overtime. The factory owners then claimed that the hours worked demonstrated that

workers wanted to work for longer hours; the workers said that they would rather work for ten hours even for less wages but were afraid of losing their jobs if they did not agree to do overtime. Marx also provides numerous examples of court actions which found in favour of the employers, not least those that led to reintroductions of the relay system (Marx, 1974 [1867], pp. 285–305).

After 1860

Marx comments that progress became quicker after 1860 due in part to the weakening of the factory owners through the 'legal limitation and regulation (that) had been wrung from them step by step' over the decades and in part through the workers gaining 'more and more allies in the classes of society not immediately interested in the question' (Marx, 1974 [1867], p. 303). One such ally of the workers was John Stuart Mill: philosopher and MP from 1866 to 1868; supporter of worker's suffrage; strong supporter in the House of Commons for the Second Reform Act of 1867 and for women's suffrage; and author of *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861).

While laws have continued to be passed since 1860 that have contributed to the maintenance of law and order to the benefit of capital, laws have also been passed that have served the interests of workers. The incremental increases to universal suffrage have already been mentioned – as, too, has the legalization of trade unions. Furthermore, through the 19th and into the 20th centuries, Acts regulating the hours worked and factory conditions were introduced, incrementally, eventually to include all work places and all men, as well as all women and children. To the further benefit of children, the Education Act of 1870 paved the way to further Acts which, in 1899, brought free, compulsory education to all children aged 5 to 12.

Evidence for legislation supporting workers' interests is even stronger in the 20th century. The earliest legislation for the provision of old-age pensions was in 1909, that for insurance against illness and unemployment in 1911. The welfare state, concerned with universal state-provision for education and health and also for unemployment and sickness allowances, was set up through legislation passed in 1944, 1946 and 1948. The Unfair Dismissal Act, which protected workers from unjustly being sacked, was introduced in 1977. Other Acts that sought to correct injustices that

included those carried out by employers were the Race Relations Act, in 1965, and the Sex Discrimination Act, in 1975. Crucial to the passing of these Acts and also to the introduction of the legislation in the latter half of the 20th century has been another development since Marx's time: namely the setting up of a political party specifically to represent the interests of the working class. The Labour Party, which grew out of the Trade Union Movement from 1890, played an important part in campaigning for legislation that supported workers' interests and, when in government, the Labour Party also played the crucial role of legislating and implementing the Acts.

Interpretation of Evidence

The subsequent evidence of legislation formulated in the interests of workers presents challenges to Marx's claim that representative democracy in capitalist societies works only to the benefit of the bourgeoisie. Some Marxists, Eduard Bernstein (1909) for example, who was a member of the German Social Democratic Party, SPD, (Michels' [1968] critical case) took the view that 'bourgeois democracy' was capable of representing workers' interests through a process of reform. In exile from Germany and living in London for over a decade (from 1887 to 1901), Bernstein viewed the legislation which he witnessed being introduced in later Victorian Britain as proof that violent revolution would not be necessary (O'Kane, 2015, pp. 25–28).

The argument used against this, so-termed, 'revisionist' view, both at the time and continuing to this day, however, is that all such legislation, no matter which political party is in government when introduced, continues to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. In short, the argument is that the continuation of the capitalist system is served by the growth in the role of the state in serving the needs of capitalist production through general taxation – general taxation which is used to provide roads, telecommunications networks, universities and schools (for research and the training and skilling of workers) and so on – all of which are necessary for the making of profits for the owners of capital. In this light, the welfare state is seen as serving the interests not just of the poor, the sick, the young and the old but of the capitalist system as a whole.

An argument also made is not simply that the capitalists, the bourgeoisie, benefit from state expenditure from taxes but that the welfare system operates as a form of social control to keep the lower classes feeling inferior (Offe, 1996). In this light, welfare payments are kept low but just high enough to stop rioting and for low paid jobs to be better options than welfare payments. Also, for example, the fact that the offices where citizens go to make welfare claims or to seek employment are deliberately kept in an unwelcoming, poorly furnished and badly decorated condition as a means of social control. Furthermore, the efficiency of the system is judged not in terms of the citizens receiving their payments promptly or in the shortness of queues and the speed of service, or in the ease of application or the adequacy of the money received to cover living expenses, but in terms of the state's total expenditure being kept low and this being portrayed in terms of 'efficiency.'

Complexity of Interests

While such criticisms of 'bourgeois democracy' may be persuasive in highlighting the shortcomings of representative democracy in practice and the unfairness and injustices in industrial society that persist, the analysis itself suffers from oversimplifying the interests that a democratic political system must serve. Not all power differences are entirely reducible to the ownership versus non-ownership of capital. As the examples of the civil rights movements in the US and Northern Ireland have shown, the distribution of power may differ not only between richer and poorer groups but also between racial, ethnic, religious or national groups. The distribution of power may also differ between the sexes, as the Suffragists and Suffragettes demonstrated – and later women's movements, too – in respect, for example, of campaigns for wage equality. The Race Relations Act and the Sex Equality Act are examples directed to two such divisions in society that are not fully covered by the dichotomy of class interests. The distribution of power may also differ in other respects: between ages, younger, older or middle-aged; between the physically or mentally able and the physically or mentally less able; between the sick and the healthy; between urban and rural groups; between those in some regions and those in others; between the more highly and the less highly educated. Though

poverty and social class may be related to these differences and in some cases strongly so, the relationship never overlaps completely.

Not only are power divisions within society now more complex than in the 19th century during Marx's time but also, in the 20th century, the class structure itself has changed. The middle class is now far larger than it was in Marx's day while the working class, those that carry out manual labour, that is, is far smaller. For example, with respect to male workers: from 1951 to 2011, the size of the working class steadily declined from constituting 55 percent of the economically active male population to 30 percent, while the percentage in managerial and professional occupations increased from 11 percent to 40 percent. For female workers, too, a similar pattern of change occurred, moving from 50 to 35 percent in the working class and 8 to 30 percent in the managerial and professional occupations (Goldthorpe, 2016, p. 92).

Assessment

While the 'bourgeoisie' may continue to get the bigger slices of cake and have the ones with more icing or more jam and cream, some of the interests served do bring shared benefits. For example, universities do not benefit only the owners of the means of production: among many things they also play a role in increasing informed political participation and in social mobility. Another example is that roads are used not only by the wealthy and by transport generated by industries but also by cars owned by a wide cross-section of society.

Nevertheless, some political parties and groups continue to be better funded and better organized than others and, in consequence, it is those parties and groups that are most likely to benefit. Wealth continues to play a crucial role and, so, a relationship between political and economic power also continues. The parties and groups that that are better funded and better organized, however, are not only those serving the interest of the class that owns capital. For example, in the United Kingdom, trade unions, with their long history and large membership are among the best organized groups in society. Nevertheless, the threat to democracy that derives from the presence of an economically and socially privileged group remains and, in

this, ownership of capital continues to be a significant factor. Furthermore, those with money and privileged education and contacts may continue to interact socially and politically to the benefit of their particular class interests. Those interests, which include having political and economic power may, in line with observations made by Mills (1956), however, be derived from control of business organizations as well as from ownership.

Conclusion

Representative democracy, as a political system, must not work in the interests of a class or group over that of the whole community and this applies not only to decision-making but also to the workings of the law, the judiciary, the police, the army and the bureaucracy.

Privileged groups – that is, those with better funding (ownership of private property continuing in importance, as also is control of business organizations), those with access to advantageous social contacts and those having effective organization and access to information – continue to be better served by representative democracy. Unequal distribution of wealth works against the equal representation of citizens. In representative democracy, alertness to these shortcomings both by government and citizens must be active in order to serve not only the objective of equal representation but also that of the limitation and control of power.

Note

1. For a brief summary of Karl Marx's theory in his own words see extract from *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, first published in 1859, reprinted in Mills (1963), pp. 42–44. ⏎

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Representative Democracy

Ideal into Practice

INTRODUCTION

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Modern representative democracy can never achieve its ideal in which the interests of all citizens and those of the community are represented and served. As the cases of *Wanting Democracy* have shown, these problems are presented by incompatible and conflicting interests, by time constraints in the collection of information and the framing and implementation of policies, and by the cost constraints in doing so. Cost constraints have also been identified as having an impact on society through the persistence of social and economic inequalities that hinder access to information, education, finances and contacts, which is detrimental to citizens' capacity to engage in political participation and have equality in voting.

The theories of *Democracy Wanting* have also revealed the threats to democracy inherent in the bureaucracy, political parties and political organizations, the government itself and the state more widely, which give power to the unelected over the elected and serve their own interests rather than those of the community. The role of the mass media of communication in the distraction of citizens from awareness of their interests has also been shown as a threat to representative democracy. More positively, arguments have been made, however, that these problems can be addressed, not completely but at least to a significant extent, if safeguards are in place.

The safeguards proposed have concerned both those within political institutions and those in society. One is the importance of cooperation and compromise both in government and in society. Another is the importance of multiple groups representing a variety of interests and opinions that have access to multiple sources of information. A third is the importance of the state bureaucracy being a 'civil service,' one that is that is neutral in the

sense of remaining in place for successive governments and that operates in the interests of citizens, alongside the existence of other bureaucracies, in political parties and organizations, as an alternative source of information. A fourth is a society in which the distribution of wealth and education is not skewed to the benefit of one group or groups to the detriment of another or others. A fifth is the importance of equality before the law and law, not violence, being the system for keeping order. A sixth lesson, and not the least, is the importance of elections that are regularly held and conducted on the basis of universal suffrage, secret ballot and votes counting equally.

12
DEMOCRACY IN THE REAL WORLD

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It was in recognition that democracy in practice will never fully meet democracy in theory that the American political scientist Robert Dahl in *Democracy and Its Critics*, published in 1989, sought to understand the relationship between democracy as an ideal and democracy as practised in the 'real world' (Dahl, 1989, p. 131). The 'real world' of Dahl's concern was neither democracies of the ancient world, from which works about democracy as an ideal mostly begin, nor those of small societies existing in pre-industrial times, often held out as models of 'true' democracy. Dahl's 'real world' was that of modern, large-scale societies. The kinds of societies, that is, that include the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland, countries of Western Europe and Dahl's own country, the United States of America.

Concerned with democracy in operation in the real world, Dahl (1989, p. 107) focused on democracy as a process: a process common to all associations, of which the state and its government is one such case. It is a process for making decisions that are binding. In respect of a democratic political system it is a process in which citizens and their interests play an essential part in decision-making. That decision-making process he viewed in terms of citizens' involvement in the setting of the agenda, their being involved in the discussion stage(s) and in deciding the outcome such that

the decisions reached are with the citizens' agreement and, importantly therefore, with their willingness to abide by those decisions.

In order to theorize the link between democracy in theory and the democratic process in reality, Dahl first abstracted the 'criteria' – 'standards – ideal standards, if you like' (Dahl, 1989, p. 108) – that needed to be satisfied in order to constitute a democratic process in theory and then to identify the institutions that would be necessary to satisfy those criteria in practice. In order to separate the reality from the ideal of democracy he coined the term 'polyarchy' for the set of institutions. The coining of the new term emphasized that the list of institutions that Dahl identified were not proposed as a definition of democracy but were to be found present in a political system acceptably claiming to be a democracy.

To generate the criteria that needed to be satisfied in a democratic process, Dahl engaged critically with the works of political philosophers concerned with the nature and justification for democracy in the modern, not ancient, world. These political philosophers included Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke but it was the work of John Stuart Mill to which Dahl was most drawn, and in particular to *Considerations on Representative Government*, first published in 1861.

John Stuart Mill

In line with the title heading of Chapter III of *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill contended '[T]hat the ideally best form of government is representative government.' In arguing his proof he centred his concerns on the representation of interests and the need for those whose interests are affected by policies to be involved in the making of those policies. In setting out Mill's argument, Dahl (1989, p. 93) emphasized the first of Mill's principles for 'good government' supported by the quotation as follows:

> '[T]hat the rights and interests of every or any person are only secure from being disregarded, when the person is himself able, and habitually disposed, to stand up for them. … Human beings are only secure from evil at the hands of others, in proportion as they have the power of being, and are, self-*protecting*.'

J. S. Mill, Considerations on Representative Government, *1861, pp. 54–55.*

From this Dahl (1989, p. 93) drew the lesson that 'people can protect their rights and interests from abuse by government, and by those who influence or control government, only if they can participate fully in determining the conduct of the government.' Endorsing Mill's position that 'nothing less can be ultimately desirable than the admission of all to a share in the sovereign power of the state' (Mill, 1861, p. 69), and clarifying that what Mill means by this is 'a democratic government,' Dahl then quotes the reason given by Mill for why the 'ideally best form of government' must be representative:

> But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate in any but some very minor portions of the public business, it follows that the ideal type of perfect government must be representative.
>
> *J. S. Mill,* Considerations on Representative Government, *1861, p. 69*

Considerations on Representative Government was first published 13 years after the final one of the three Chartist petitions. The position he takes is in line with the arguments put forward in those petitions. For comparison, the 1842 Petition opens with:

> Government originated from, was designed to protect the freedom and promote the happiness of, and ought to be responsible to, the whole people.
>
> That the only authority on which any body of men can make laws and govern society, is delegation from the people.
>
> That as Government was designed for the benefit and protection of, and must be obeyed and supported by all, therefore all should be equally represented. [(*The 'whole people' are specified in the petition as 'the people of Great Britain and Ireland.'*]
>
> *The Chartist Petition, 1842*

Dahl (1989, p. 103) further drew attention to Mill's argument that excluding the working classes from direct participation in government not only denied them the means of fully protecting their interests but also that the composition of the then members of parliament meant that Parliament was biased against the interests of the working classes:

> Yet does Parliament, or almost any of the members composing it, ever for an instant look at any question with the eyes of a working man? When a subject arises in which the labourers as such have an interest, is it regarded from any point of view but that of employers of labour?
>
> *J. S. Mill,* Considerations on Representative Government, *1861, p. 66*

Unlike the Chartists, Mill was a supporter not only of working men's suffrage but also of women's suffrage. Furthermore, in 1866, he was elected as a member of parliament on policies that included that of votes for women. In 1867, he argued vigorously in the House of Commons in support of the Second Reform Act, which expanded male suffrage. In the same year, he presented a petition to the House for female suffrage and, after losing his seat in 1868, his book, *The Subjection of Women*, which he had written in 1861, was published in 1869.

In *Considerations on Representative Government* Mill made the case for the extension of suffrage to women as follows:

> I consider it ['difference of sex'] to be as entirely irrelevant to political rights as difference in height or in the colour of the hair. All human beings have the same interest in good government: the welfare of all is alike affected by it, and they have equal need of a voice in it to secure their share of the benefits. If there be any difference, women require it more than men, since, being physically weaker, they are more dependent on law and society for protection.
>
> *J. S. Mill,* Considerations on Representative Government, *1861, pp. 175–176*

To Mill's arguments against working men's and women's exclusion from suffrage, Dahl (1989, p. 104) additionally highlighted the example of exclusion from suffrage on the basis of racial discrimination, citing the case

of the United States before, as he put it, 'the passage and vigorous enforcement of the civil rights acts of the 1960s.' In line with Mill's theoretical position, Dahl, also, strongly emphasized the importance in a democracy of weighting everyone equally because, as he emphasized, each adult is the best judge of their interests and because 'laws, rules and policies' apply equally to every citizen (Dahl, 1989, p. 105).

Building on Mill's (1861, p. 30) view of 'good government' as being one that promotes 'the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves' and that 'the first question in respect to any political institutions is how far they tend to foster in members of the community the various desirable qualities, moral and intellectual,' Dahl (1989, pp. 104–105) further drew attention to the potential that democratic regimes, as opposed to all other types of regimes, have in providing the conditions in which people can develop understanding of their interests, cultivate awareness of those affected by others' actions and engage with others in seeking collective decisions.

Having considered works on democracy by political philosophers, Dahl (1989, p. 108) proposed five criteria of a democratic process: those 'standards – ideal standards, if you like.' These criteria he labelled as: voting equality, effective participation, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, and inclusion. 'A perfect democratic process,' he explained, 'would be one that met the criteria perfectly and its government would be a perfect democratic government' (Dahl, 1989, p. 109).

Dahl's Criteria of a Democratic Process

Dahl argues that a democratic process has the following five criteria.[1]

Voting Equality

The criterion of voting equality follows from his arguments, outlined above, in respect of each citizen having equal weight and democracy being viewed as a process in which collective decisions are made. Dahl emphasized that it is at the 'binding stage' that voting equality is necessary but is not, necessarily, needed at the preceding stages where discussion and consideration of possibilities takes place. In his case for voting equality

being a necessary criterion to be satisfied in the democratic process, he argued that it is needed for the protection of the interests of those 'subject to the regulations or actions of the officials of a state' (Dahl, 1989, p. 93).

Effective Participation

The second of Dahl's criteria for a democratic process is far more than the simple requirement for casting votes in regularly held elections. The criterion of effective participation is concerned with the process of decision-making. It is about having 'adequate and equal opportunities' for expressing preferences, for putting 'questions on the agenda' and for 'expressing reasons' for one position rather than another (Dahl, 1989, p. 109). It is also concerned with citizens' preferences being known and, crucially, being taken into account in decisions made: 'They must have adequate and equal opportunities for placing questions on the agenda and for expressing reasons for endorsing one outcome rather than another' (Dahl, 1989, p. 109).

Enlightened Understanding

Enlightened understanding concerns the availability of information and the capacity and opportunity for its assessment. Dahl defines enlightened understanding as follows:

> Each citizen ought to have adequate and equal opportunities for discovering and validating (within the time limit permitted by the need for a decision) the choice on the matter to be decided that would best serve the citizen's interests.
>
> *Robert A. Dahl,* Democracy and its Critics, *1989, p. 112*

Dahl also specifically mentions such opportunities for citizens to understand 'means and ends', to discover interests as they relate to each citizen, to develop appreciation of the expected consequences of policies for their interests and also for those of all the other citizens affected by the policies. It follows that information should not be withheld or suppressed if of a nature that if known would lead to citizens reaching different decisions.

Information important to the issue should also not be available only to those privileged to receive it.

Control of the Agenda

Dahl includes the criterion of control of the agenda in recognition that, for example, a military takeover might retain voting but restrict the issues for which voting would be allowed. He formulates the proposition in the following way:

> The demos [citizens] must have the exclusive opportunity to decide how matters are to be placed on the agenda of matters that are to be decided by means of the democratic process.
>
> *Robert A. Dahl,* Democracy and Its Critics, *1989, p. 113*

Inclusion

Dahl explains inclusion as:

> [T]he demos [citizens] should include all adults subject to the binding collective decisions of the association.
>
> *Robert A. Dahl,* Democracy and Its Critics, *1989, p. 120*

Inclusion as universal suffrage is essential in the specific association of the governing body (the government) of the state. The argument is simply that any group of adults excluded from citizenship will, as he puts it, in line with Mill, 'be lethally weakened in defending their own interests' (Dahl, 1989, p. 129). He gives the examples of those who have been excluded as women, skilled and unskilled labourers, those without property, and racial minorities.

Dahl goes on to consider whether any groups should not be included in respect of having the vote and makes the case for 'transients and persons proved to be mentally defective' (Dahl, 1989, p. 129) to be excluded. He recognized that there are problems of definition in both 'adult' and 'transient' and that the exclusion of 'the mentally defective' rests on the definition and measurement of competence. Dahl also admits to difficulties

arising over the age at which the vote should be given: the boundary between adult and child. He questions, too, whether policies affecting only one community should be decided by the electorate as a whole.

Illustration of the problem concerning policies affecting only one or more communities when decisions are made by the electorate as a whole has been found in the outcome of the EU referendum, where Scotland and Northern Ireland had contrary results to those in England and Wales, and the problem was also highlighted in issues relating to the operation of democracy in some communities in Northern Ireland before the Good Friday Agreement. Such questioning also speaks to the problems, both actual and conceptual, of the operation of democracy in each separate member country of the European Union while at the same time in operation in the 'community' of countries that together constituted the European Union. Some consideration of how the interests of the 'transient and persons proved to be mentally defective' are to be represented also needs answering.

Generating the Institutions of a Democracy in the Real World

Having identified the five criteria of a democratic process – voting equality, effective participation, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, inclusion – Dahl, with his focus being on actual democracies in the 'real world,' then went on to identify the institutions of a political process that would be required to satisfy the five criteria of democracy. Reflecting also on theoretical works in political science, Dahl (1989, p. 221) identified seven institutions necessary to satisfy those five criteria. These institutions are broadly defined in order to allow differences in the particular choices made in each political system. For example; whether a presidential or a prime ministerial system is chosen; the electoral system is first-past-the-post or one of the varieties of proportional representation; governments are formed by a single party or by coalitions of parties; or whether the legislature is bicameral or unicameral.

The Seven Institutions of Polyarchy[2]

1. *Elected Officials*: 'Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials' (p. 221).
2. *Free and Fair Elections*: for all 'elected officials' and such elections to be 'relatively' (p. 233) frequently held and fairly conducted without coercion.
3. *Inclusive Suffrage*: citizens ('practically all adults,' p. 221) to have the right to vote in elections for officials.
4. *Right to Run for Office*: such a right to be open to 'most adults' (p. 233); age qualification allowed that may be higher than for voting.
5. *Freedom of Expression*: 'Citizens have the right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly defined, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order, and the prevailing ideas and values' (p. 221).
6. *Alternative Information*: citizens have the right to seek such information and also for it to exist and be protected in law.
7. *Associational Autonomy*: to achieve their rights, citizens have 'a right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups' (p. 221) and for them to 'attempt to influence the government by competing in elections and by other peaceful means' (p. 233).

(Dahl, 1989, pp. 221–233)

Though all seven institutions are argued to be necessary to satisfy all five of the criteria of a democratic process, each one of the five are argued to be satisfied by different combinations of the institutions. Only the 'Control of the Agenda' criterion would require all seven. 'Voting Equality' would be satisfied just by 1. and 2.; 'Inclusion' would require all the institutions other than 1. and 2.; 'Effective Participation' would require all of the institutions except 2.; and 'Enlightened Understanding' would be satisfied just by the last three: 5., 6. and 7.[3]

Any political system in which all seven institutions are found to be present would be classified by Dahl as a 'polyarchy.' That is to say, the presence of the seven institutions of democracy would serve to identify a

democracy in practice but not define democracy as a theoretical ideal. Saki's Moung Ka's phrase 'what is called a democracy' (Munro, 1993) comes to mind.

Critical Considerations

The approach to theorizing representative democracy in practice adopted by Dahl is persuasive in fitting well with the philosophical position of J. S. Mill on representation and with the argument for representation put forward by the Chartist petitions. Not only fitting with Mill's position on working men's and women's suffrage, Dahl's 'Inclusion' also aligns with the Russian petitioners' demands for universal suffrage. Furthermore the importance of inclusion also fits with the US civil rights campaign in respect of racial minorities. But though Dahl requires the inclusion of groups based on class, sex and race he does not mention groups based on religion, so important in the case of Northern Ireland, and neither does he mention nationalities, so problematic in the case of Unionists and Republicans in Northern Ireland and in the outcome of the 2016 referendum where Scotland and Northern Ireland had opposite outcomes to those in Wales and England.

Though failing to consider religious and nationality groups as examples of being 'lethally weakened in defending their own interests' (Dahl, 1989, p. 129) when excluded from citizenship, Dahl's five criteria and the seven institutions of democracy fit well with the idea of representative democracy expressed in the *Wanting Democracy* cases – the Chartist and 1905 Russian petitions, the US and Northern Ireland civil rights movements – in respect of the demands made for universal, secret and equal suffrage, freedom of speech, press and association and, as also stressed in the EU referendum case, the importance of those affected by policies in participation in the decision-making process. There are, however, notable absences in Dahl's criteria and institutions as compared with the demands and expectations of democracy found both in the *Wanting Democracy* cases and in the *Wanting Democracy* theories of Weber, Michels, Mills and Marx.

The most obvious absences from Dahl's criteria and institutions of democracy as compared with the *Wanting Democracy* cases are those

concerned with social and economic conditions, bureaucracy and the nature of law and its application by police and judiciary. With respect to the police, Dahl (1989, pp. 244–251) does argue for civilian control over the military and police as part explanation for the presence of polyarchy. His concern is with restriction of the military and the police force's capacity to destroy democracy rule, through a coup, rather than with the role played by the police and judiciary in application of the law together with consideration of the nature of the laws and their compatibility with democracy.

With respect to comparisons made with the lessons drawn from the *Democracy Wanting* theories, the most notable absences in the list of institutions of representative democracy are those necessary for achieving the aim of the limitation and control of power, so central to Sartori's (1987) theoretical position on modern democracy. And these are not the only critical considerations that must be raised.

Government as Exception

The first critical consideration is whether the best way to view the democratic government of a country is from the perspective of their being a case of a democratic process in common with all democratic associations. For a start, the state is far larger and more complex than any single association and Dahl (1998) goes some way to recognize this in his later work:

> The institutions of polyarchal democracy are necessary for democratizing the government of the state in a large-scale system, specifically a country. But they might be unnecessary or downright unsuitable for democracy in units on a smaller (or larger?) scale, or in smaller associations that are independent of the state and help to make up civil society.
>
> *Robert A. Dahl,* On Democracy, *1998, p. 101*

Not least of the ways in which the state differs from the generality of associations is in being able to impose punishment for failing to abide by laws through having a police force, judges, law courts and prisons. This is a point made clear by Marx. It is also one made by Weber in 'Politics as a Vocation' where he defines the state in terms of having a monopoly of

legitimate coercion (Gerth and Mills, 1991, p. 78). States not only have police, law courts and prisons, they also have armed forces, which other associations in democracies do not.

There are other issues too. A democratic government is composed not as one association but as a multiplicity of associations with the government itself changing between associations (political parties) and sometimes consisting of more than one association (party coalition); furthermore, decision-making involves opposition not just within the state-government association but outside it, whether from opposition parties within parliament or from associations outside parliament including social and economic pressure groups, protest groups and the media. While the bureaucracy of an association is either recruited from within the association on a voluntary basis or employed by the association on a salaried basis, the bureaucracy that administers for governments is a separate part of the state. And there is a further problem with respect to bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy

'Elected officials' tops Dahl's list of the seven institutions of polyarchy. It is argued to be crucial because 'Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in elected officials' (Dahl, 1989, p. 233). It is a claim that seems unchallengeable but viewed in the light of one of the concerns expressed about the undemocratic nature of bureaucracy by the 1905 Russian petitioners, by those in Britain wanting to leave the European Union and C. Wright Mills' concerns for America in the 1950s, it is difficult other than to wonder who count as officials and where 'control' begins and ends. Perhaps it follows from Dahl's listing that bureaucrats, too, should be elected but were they to be so it would seem, and even more likely than the case argued by Weber, that the bureaucracy could become a separate source of power from the elected government.

Consideration of bureaucracy draws attention, furthermore, to there being nothing in the seven institutions listed by Dahl that guarantees that the bureaucracy will not engage in the arbitrariness and corruption complained of by the Russian petitioners or hinder the workings of democracy through red tape and acting as a barrier to the true representation of citizens' interests, as claimed by those opposed to membership of the

European Union and by the Northern Ireland civil rights movement. This relates to the need for the limitation and control of power. Without guarantee for an independent bureaucracy, the rise of key unelected officials into the political executive part of the power elite, which Mills (1956) argued had occurred in America in the 1950s and which was so strikingly displayed in the choices for key officials so quickly after the 2024 presidential election, could not be prevented from undermining representative democracy.

In line with Weber's (1991) views of bureaucracy, views shared by Mills (1956), a bureaucracy independent of government and serving the interests of citizens needs to be added to Dahl's list of institutions. Also in line with both Weber and Mills, appointment as a bureaucrat should be through a career structure with positions and promotions based on education and examination and, ideally, the bureaucracy should be permanent, serving each government objectively and not changing with each government.

Participation: Income and Education

A criticism levelled against Dahl is that his approach focuses on institutions that enable the opportunity for participation but which neither ensure participation nor guarantee that citizens have the power to participate. For example, in the argument Dahl (1989, p. 109) puts forward for the importance of 'Effective Participation' he specifies only that citizens must have 'adequate and equal opportunities.' As Bachrach, taking issue with Dahl's earlier works, argues:

> [T]he issue is whether democracy can diffuse power sufficiently throughout society to inculcate among people of all walks of life a justifiable feeling that they have the power to participate in decisions which affect themselves and the common life of the community, especially the immediate community in which they work and spend most of their waking hours and energy.
>
> *Peter Bachrach,* The Theory of Democratic Elitism, *1969, p. 92*

J. S. Mill (1861, pp. 54–55) had captured the importance of citizens having the power to participate in his argument that 'the rights and interests of every or any person are only secure from being disregarded when the

person is himself able, and habitually disposed, to stand up for them.' In summarizing Mill's arguments Dahl (1989, p. 93), as explained, had employed the quotation in presenting Mill's argument. He had then defended Mill's justification of representative democracy being 'good government' in terms of its being a system to serve citizens 'rights and interests.'

In line with his view of representative democracy as a political process, Dahl (1989) accepted J. S. Mill's position on good government but drew from it the potential that democratic regimes, as opposed to all other types of regimes, can provide the conditions in which people can develop understanding of their interests and engage with others in seeking decisions through reaching agreement. In this light, in line with Bachrach (1969), the facts that large numbers of the electorate do not even vote in elections is of concern. Comparing voter turnout in US presidential elections between 1936 and 2020, turnout fell to just 49 percent in 1996 and at its highest level, which was in 2020, voter turnout reached 66.2 percent (Statista, no date). In 2024 voter turnout fell back a little to 63.7 percent (Ballotpedia, no date).

Not only does turnout at elections in the US give grounds for questioning whether people feel that they, as Bachrach (1969, p. 92) puts it, 'have the power to participate in decisions which affect themselves and the common life of the community,' but the levels of voter turnout at different levels of income also question the reality of democracy in practice for all. As Laurison and Rastogi (2023, p. 1) argue, 'High voter turnout is part of democratic legitimacy, but the degree to which voters represent the electorate is also important.' For all four of the elections studied, 2008–2020, their findings found that voter turnout was highest for households with higher incomes. When levels of participation are found to be lower for poorer citizens the claim for there being equal representation can clearly be questioned.

Not only are those in the lower incomes less likely to vote but Laurison and Rastogi (2023) also found voter turnout and educational attainment similarly related: those with a university degree had the highest level of turnout. As argued in respect of the points generated from the EU debate and the 2016 referendum in the UK, universal education is needed for acquiring and weighing information and also for participation. Participation would be likely to be reduced by poor levels of education through the

reduction in the capacity to access information and, without good access, alternative information would also be less likely to be sourced and, more generally, interest in politics would be likely to be reduced. Expression of opinions, too, could be hampered. Lower levels of education would also likely adversely affect the numbers of citizens willing to put themselves forward as candidates in elections.

In short, without good levels of education the necessary criteria to be satisfied by Dahl's seven listed institutions would be limited and most particularly in respect of the two criteria of 'Effective Participation' and 'Enlightened Understanding.' Furthermore, not only would poor general levels of education be likely to reduce effective participation and enlightened understanding but the more educated citizens would also be advantaged over the less educated, such that Dahl's other criteria – voting equality, control of the agenda and inclusion – would also be likely to be inadequately met.

These arguments about levels of education can also be made about the effect of economic inequality excluding people from full citizenship. Lack of funds, necessary for travel for example, would be likely to restrict the accessibility of and, therefore, membership of voluntary associations. Crucially, too, poverty would itself be likely to hinder access to education, especially at the higher levels, because earnings from employment would need to take precedence. As Newton (1969, p. 219) argued in respect of Dahl's acceptance of a pluralist democratic system (polyarchy) as democracy in working practice:

> The mere presence of millions of poverty stricken amid American affluence is a sure sign that the pluralist system included some people out, that it works to the benefit of a particular section of society, and that the rest are not powerful enough to get the minimum justice which Dahl claims the system provides.
>
> *Kenneth Newton, 'A Critique of the Pluralist Model',* Acta Sociologica, *1969, p. 219*

Conclusion

While democracy cannot be defined simply in terms of a set of political institutions, the following are essential: the holding of elections for representation, the freedom to run for office, universal suffrage, freedom of expression, access to alternative information and the right and accessible facilities to form groups – groups that include political parties, voluntary associations and trade unions. Identification of a representative democracy must, in addition, however, include consideration of the nature and conduct of the bureaucracy, the police, the judicial system and the army, which must all be under the regulation of the representative government and serving the interests of citizens and their community.

The statistics on income and education in the United States also suggest a lesson on the importance of distribution. Societies in which there is more equal distribution of wealth and income and also of educational attainment are more likely to have higher levels of participation and, so, to achieve voting equality more closely.

Notes

1. These five criteria are re-affirmed in Dahl (1998, pp. 37–38). ⏎
2. In Dahl (1998, pp. 85–86), these seven institutions are reduced to six, with 4. 'Right to Run for Office' incorporated into 'Inclusive Suffrage,' re-named 'Inclusive Citizenship.' The justifications for the institutions, however, are unchanged. ⏎
3. In Dahl (1998, pp. 92–99) there are some variations. 'Control of the Agenda' no longer requires 'Inclusive Citizenship;' 'Voting Equality' only requires 'Free and Fair Elections' (re-named 'Free, Fair, and Frequent Elections'); 'Inclusion' (re-named 'Full Inclusion') only requires 'Inclusive Citizenship;' 'Effective Participation' requires 'Elected Officials' (re-named 'Elective Representatives'), 'Freedom of Expression,' 'Alternative Information' and 'Associational Autonomy;' and 'Enlightened Understanding' requires the same as 'Effective Participation' except for 'Elected Officials' (re-named 'Elected Representatives'). While debate could be had about why the changes have been made, crucially, Dahl's important argument remains that all the listed political institutions, in their various combinations, are

required in order to satisfy the five criteria of the democratic process. ⏎

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13
DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

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A society that is associated with representative democracies was recognized by Dahl (1989): a society that he called 'modern dynamic pluralist society' (Dahl, 1989, p. 251), MDP society for short. He argued, however, that the lessons of history show that for the presence of the seven institutions – elected officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information, associational autonomy – that are needed to satisfy the five criteria of the democratic process – voting equality, effective participation, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, inclusion – an MDP society, though 'strongly associated,' is not a necessary condition for those seven institutions, which he termed polyarchy.

Modern Dynamic Pluralist Society

The modern dynamic pluralist society is described by Dahl (1989, p. 251) as: modern, in the sense of having 'for example, historically high average levels of wealth, income, consumption, and education, great occupational diversity, large urban populations, a marked decrease in the agricultural population, and the relative economic importance of agriculture;' dynamic, in the sense of having 'economic growth' and 'increasing standards of living;' and pluralist, in the sense of having 'numerous relatively autonomous groups and organizations, particularly in the economy.'

An MDP society is helpful to the democratic process, Dahl (1989, p. 252) argues, because it 'disperses power, influence, authority, and control away from any single center toward a variety of individuals, groups, associations, and organizations' and also because 'it fosters attitudes and beliefs favourable to democratic ideas.'

These features – modern, dynamic, pluralist – though independent, Dahl accepts reinforce each other; what he rejects is a 'simple cause and effect' relationship between MDP society and the set of seven institutions in the 'real world.' He argues, therefore, that an MDP society is neither necessary nor sufficient for a polyarchy. His prime example for the MDP society not being necessary for the presence of the seven institutions is that of India: 'where polyarchy was established when the population was overwhelmingly agricultural, illiterate, occupationally much less specialized than in an MDP country, and highly traditional and rule-bound in behaviour and beliefs' (Dahl, 1989, p. 253). As further evidence for his position, Dahl also stresses the rural, agricultural nature of the United States in the 19th century and the similar rural nature of society with independent farmers in cases such as the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Sweden and Denmark and those of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland (p. 254).

To strengthen his argument that the MDP society is not necessary for the presence of the seven institutions of polyarchy needed to satisfy the five criteria of the democratic process, Dahl (1989, p. 254) also gives examples of the presence of an MDP society but the absence of representative democracy. His examples are Taiwan and South Korea in the 1980s where the leadership overcame democratic oppositions, movements and ideas that had been 'fostered' by the MDP society.[1]

MDP Society Without a Representative Democracy: South Korea and Taiwan

Certainly, in the 1980s, neither Taiwan nor South Korea could be counted as democracies. In the case of South Korea, a second military coup occurred in 1979, the first having taken place in 1961. In the assessment of the Asia Watch Committee's report for 1986, in South Korea there was 'almost

complete denial of civil and political rights' (Cho, 2006, p. 180). Following pro-democracy protests against the military junta in 1987 – the June Democratic Struggle – in which millions of people came out onto the streets in protest, a new constitution was introduced and presidential elections were held in December of that year. The president elected, however, was a member of the military junta. Pro-democracy, student-led demonstrations re-erupted and the military regime was eventually ended in 1992 (see Yoon, 2023).

As in South Korea, Tiawan in the 1980s had both an authoritarian regime and martial law. In Taiwan's case, the authoritarian regime was not a military junta installed by a coup but single-party rule by the Kuomintang, KMT. The Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan when defeated by the Communist Party on mainland China in 1949. Taiwan had been a Japanese colony from 1895 until 1945, the year that Japan was defeated in the Second World War, when it again became a part of China as it had been before 1895. South Korea, as part of the entire Korean peninsula, too, had been a Japanese colony until 1945. Initially divided into zones, the south of Korea under US occupation and the north under occupation by the Soviet Union, South Korea and North Korea became two separate countries following the Korean War, 1950–1953.

In 1987, the same year in which South Korea gained a new constitution and held elections, martial law was lifted in Taiwan. But, in respect of democracy, from then rather than similarities between the two countries, it is the contrasts between the two cases that become striking.

Taiwan Since the 1980s

In Taiwan, the lifting of martial law followed the death of the president and his replacement by the vice president and though the first time the opposition party – the Democratic Progressive Party, DPP – won, the presidential election was not until March 2000. The years 1988 to 2000 'saw a complete transition to democratic rule' (Hsiao, 2006, p. 209). From 1980, social movements for democratic change began to mobilize and, after martial law was ended, social movements emerged campaigning on issues such as gender equality, environmentalism and human rights, which led to the creation of independent associations. Described as 'local civil society', Hsiao (2006, pp. 209–210) argues that these social movements 'profoundly

changed state-civil society power relations in Taiwan.' The associations that emerged included those concerned with welfare, education, the protection of the disadvantaged and community social service. The DPP, elected in 2000, supported the setting up of a welfare state. The actions taken by the associations' engagement with government have included not only dialogue, petitions and organizing press conferences but also the staging of rallies and sit-ins. (See Hsiao, 2006, pp. 216, 223 and 219.)

Through to the present, not only have competitive elections been held, a multi-party system emerged, governments changed and independent associations proliferated but Taiwan's Freedom Index, which relates to the strength of civil and political rights, has reached a score comparable to those of long-lived democracies in Europe and the United States (Rigger, 2025).

Today, Taiwan no longer presents a counter-case to the MDP society being necessary for democracy but, crucially, the case points away from the importance of an MDP society, necessary or not, for the seven institutions of polyarchy and, rather, points to the importance, over time, of the building of the right kind of society for sustaining representative democracy. A society that differs from Dahl's MDP society and which brings civil and political rights to the fore, highlights the action of social movements and also recognizes the role played by government in a dynamic relationship with society.

South Korea Since the 1980s

The case of South Korea since the 1980s presents a sharp contrast to that of Taiwan. Unlike Taiwan where civil society grew and blossomed through the pressures brought by social movements and the proliferation of independent organizations, in South Korea social movements and independent organizations campaigning for human and civil rights were weakened or suppressed (Doucette 2025, pp. 366–367). Though the military regime ended in 1992 and the country had a civilian president, the majority of the (newly merged) ruling party were politicians from the authoritarian party (Shin, 2006, p. 160), and though the 1992 constitution has stayed in place and multi-party elections have been held, events have occurred which, before 2025 at least, continued to question the classification of South Korea

as a democracy and also offer illustration of why polyarchy and democracy are not the same.

In 2004 the centre-left president was impeached for reasons including illegal political funds following a campaign jointly led by two opposition parties, the largest being the party that had originated from the military dictatorship (Shin, 2006, p. 171). It led to weeks of protest 'candle light' street demonstrations. In 2017, the president was impeached for reasons including corruption; in 2022, election fraud was unearthed and, in December 2024, President Yoon Suk Yeol, newly elected in 2022, declared martial law on television broadcast at ten o'clock at night. It was at this point that South Korea demonstrated its capability for resilient democracy.

Following the declaration of martial law, in December 2024, widespread street protests erupted and elected representatives, 190 in total, rushed to the National Assembly, some scaling fences to get through the police cordon, barricaded the doors and voted against martial law (Kwon and Butler, 2026). In consequence, three hours later, Yoon Suk Yeol withdrew his martial law declaration and, on 3 January 2025, he was impeached. Flouting the National Assembly's decision, the president tried to stay in power, remaining in the presidential residence for over two weeks before he was arrested in what has been described as a 'self-coup' (Doucette, 2025, p. 359). Throughout, pro-democracy street protests continued. The Constitutional Court upheld the impeachment and, in June 2025, presidential elections were held, which brought the opposition Democratic Party candidate to power.

Today, though South Korea, in line with its Constitution, has elections that are held between competing political parties and has changes of government, debate about reforms needed to its Constitution continues (Doucette, 2025, pp. 369–370). Classification of South Korea as a resilient representative democracy remains uncertain. This is so not only because the political history of the country advises caution in assessment and suggests a longer time is needed before classification is made but also because, in the light of comparison with Taiwan, the case draws attention to characteristics of South Korea's society – characteristics that point to the need for a different kind of society required for the political institutions of democracy to be sustained.

The emphasis on the MDP society is for its being pluralist, not only in having 'numerous relatively autonomous groups and organizations' but that

this should be so 'particularly in the economy' (Dahl, 1989, p. 215). Though South Korea fits the description of an MDP society in respect of having a capitalist economy, comparison with Taiwan draws attention to the independent social movements and organizations concerned with civil and political rights being of greater importance than groups and organizations in the economy. In contrast to Taiwan where social movements developed during the 1980s and then played a crucial role in shaping and developing democracy from 1987, in South Korea, initially heavily constrained by the state and, therefore, employing methods of violence when met by violence, social movement organizations began to play an important role only from late 1996 (Shin, 2006, pp. 167–169). The case of South Korea also highlights the form of capitalism appropriate to the kind of society necessary for representative democracy.

In South Korea the economy is dominated by *chaebol*s, family-controlled conglomerates that even if the families no longer hold a majority stake in the firm the founders' descendants remain in control: examples of the largest *chaebol*s include Samsung and Hyundai. As such, the South Korean economy contrasts with the liberal forms of capitalism, in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, where 'shareholder governance' is the normal form taken by firms and shareholders – which can be individuals or, for example, pension funds – hold a portfolio of shares in multiple firms (Britannica, no date-a).[2] An economic system of 'shareholder governance' better fits Sartori's (1987) conception of modern democracy as valuing difference and diversity.

The lessons drawn from the comparisons made between the cases of Taiwan and South Korea show that the fact that the MDP society is not necessary for representative democracy does not rule out that another kind of society, one with independent political and social organizations and civil and political freedoms and a type of economy with widespread ownership, might be necessary. A society, more specifically, in which difference and diversity is valued and where, therefore, social and political movements and independent organizations seeking civil and political rights are encouraged and difference and diversity is reflected in the nature of its economy. A society, furthermore, where there is dynamic cooperative interaction between government and society in supporting and strengthening the goal of representative democracy.

Representative Democracy Without an MDP Society: India

That India sustained a democracy in spite of being a relatively poor and agricultural country is offered by Dahl as the strongest evidence of the MDP society not being necessary for representative democracy. As Dahl noted, India's democracy has not been without incident. In 1975, the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was found guilty of election fraud. The decision of the Supreme Court on her appeal was to allow her to stay as prime minister but with penalties. In consequence protests calling for her resignation grew. On the grounds of 'internal disturbances,' as set out in the Constitution, a national emergency (the Emergency) was declared in June 1975. It lasted until March 1977 and during that time an estimated 110,000 people were imprisoned without trial, the press was severely censored, freedoms were restricted, the authority of the judiciary was reduced, severe measures were taken against trade unions and workers' rights, hundreds of people were killed and, with the drive to reduce poverty, in a programme of vasectomies directed at poor men some sterilizations were carried out forcibly (Thakur, 1995, p. 338; Britannica, no date-c).

The state of emergency was brought to an end, in 1977, by a snap general election, called by the prime minister. In that election she and the Congress Party, which had been in power since India gained its independence, in 1947, were defeated and replaced by the Janata Party, created from the combination of opposition parties. Indira Gandhi was re-elected in 1980.[3] Since then elections have been regularly held through which governments have been changed and alternation of parties in power has been achieved. Concerns have been raised about the same prime minister, Narendra Modi, having been in power since 2014 and, in particular, because his party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP, is a pro-Hindu party in a country with a significant Muslim minority and other smaller religious minorities besides. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) gained majorities in both the 2014 and 2019 elections but, against expectations, in the 2024 election the NDA gained too few seats to form a majority and, in consequence, both the willingness and capacity of the government to represent both minority and majority interests has been strengthened. In 2019, election turnout, at 67.40 percent of the electorate,

was the highest recorded (Mahendra, 2024); a figure higher than that of the highest recorded in US presidential elections, at 66.2 percent in 2020 (Statista, no date-a).

India's Passage to Democracy

The passage through which India gained its independence in 1947, for like South Korea and Taiwan it had been a colony (though not of Japan as in their cases but of Britain), was very different to those of both South Korea and Taiwan. India's route to independence began in the 19th century with the Indian National Congress, INC, more usually just Congress, which held its first meeting in 1885. It was not then a political party but rather a body for coordination of campaigning for Indian interests that ran counter to those met under British rule. It was not, at that point, campaigning for independence but rather for India, with all its diverseness and differences to be a nation. The fundamental principles of Congress, as quoted by A. O. Hume, April 1888, were India's 'fusion into one whole,' its 'regeneration' and 'the modification' of the conditions of the 'union between England and India' such as 'may be unjust or injurious to the latter country' (Pandey, 1979, Document 2, pp. 6–7).

The movement for Indian independence was led by Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi. In 1920, Gandhi's action against British rule took the form of withdrawal of action, *hartal*. At that point Gandhi, as the leader of the All-India Home Rule League, became closely involved with Congress after it had undertaken a counter-inquiry to that of the official investigation into the killing by British troops of 300 Indians in Amritsar. This association with Gandhi led to Congress, which had previously campaigned through constitutional means such as challenging legislation in court, to adopt his method of non-cooperation. In 1929, Congress decided to adopt the goal of independence and along with it made the threat to the British Government that, if independence were not given, a civil disobedience movement would be launched (Ardley, 2002, pp. 138–144).

The civil disobedience campaign, led by Gandhi, was in line with his philosophy of *satyagraha*,[4] which practised non-violent resistance and involved mass action. It was the movement from which the US civil rights movement in the years 1954 to 1958 took inspiration for its chosen methods

of non-violent protest, including long marches: ideas and methods later taken up by NICRA in Northern Ireland.

The first act of the civil disobedience campaign was the Salt March, which took place across the state of Gujarat in 1930, in protest at the tax on salt and the prohibition of its production by Indians. Led by Gandhi, the route covered 240 miles, took almost a month, and travelled through villages where the message against the salt tax and its unfairness on poor people was spread and the value of civil disobedience against British rule was demonstrated through the evidence of the action they were taking. Starting out with just a few dozen people the march had grown to 2,500 marchers by the time they reached their destination: Dandi on the Arabian Sea coast. There Gandhi picked up salt from the rocks as affirmation that, in spite of the law, they could produce it themselves (Britannica, no date-b). In the same year, provincial elections were boycotted and other goods, principally cloth, were also boycotted as part of the protest (Ardley, 2002, p. 146).

The civil disobedience campaign had two important consequences. One was that the government made concessions, including both allowing salt to be produced for home consumption and giving the right to peaceful protest. The other was that, through its close association with Gandhi and the civil disobedience campaign, Congress gained prestige and also drew further support including among Hindu politicians from outside Congress (Ardley, 2002, p. 147).

In 1935, the British parliament introduced the Government of India Act under which direct elections were established in provincial legislatures and the electorate increased: estimates vary between one-tenth and one-sixth of the population. Elections were held from 1936–1937 and Congress, along with other political parties, became a fully modern political party. Congress won the first general election held after independence: an election conducted on the basis of full universal suffrage, and retained a majority in subsequent elections until 1977 (the election that ended the Emergency).

Seeking Explanation for the Durability of India's Democracy

Political Factors

Unlike the cases of South Korea and Taiwan before independence, India had a history of political parties, Congress being the oldest and the most prominent. As reference to the 1936–1937 elections and the boycott of provincial elections in 1920 indicates, India also had experience of elections. Elections, though on a very limited suffrage, were held for provincial councils from 1892. In these respects India before independence was like Britain before the first Chartist petition in having crucial, though less than perfect, aspects of modern representative democracy. As noted, suffrage became universal (male and female) on independence in 1947, less, that is, than two decades after all women got the vote in the UK.

India before independence had further similarities with Britain, after the Chartist petitions, from 1853: the year when the bureaucracy began to turn into a modern civil service. One of the factors highlighted in explanation for Indian democracy and its endurance is there being an efficiently functioning civil service on which the post-independence civil service was built (Kohli, 2001, p. 6). Under the Indian Constitution the conditions of civil servants, both in the central government civil service and in the state legislatures, are the responsibility of public service commissions and the independence of these commissions is safeguarded (Thakur, 1995, pp.161–164). Such safeguards include set-down grounds for dismissal, salary to be paid for by the appropriate central or state governments and the prevention of paid employment outside of the civil service. In short, in line with both Weber's (1991) and Mills' (1956) positions, in India, the civil service is a career bureaucracy and permanent rather than being one based on political appointments that change with each new government.[5]

Another factor offered as explanation for the endurance of Indian democracy is the appropriateness for such a large and diverse society, not least linguistically and regionally, of the design of the federalist system, particularly in respect of basic rights and safeguards for minorities (Sarkar, 2001, p. 25). An example is that of the three-language formula, in which Hindi is the official language but states can adopt a language other than Hindi as their official language and all states are required to teach Hindi, English and the local language (Thakur, 1995, p. 98).

The federal system was devised in the making of the constitution by the Constituent Assembly over the years from December 1946 to November

1949. Sarkar (2001, pp. 30–31) argues that, rather than benefitting from the schemes devised by the British, from 1935, the form taken by the Indian federalist system was through reaction against them. Examples of this are the insistence on universal suffrage, to which the British were opposed, and the rejection of the proposal, made by the British, that representation should be such that Muslims, Christians and Sikhs could only vote for candidates of their own religion (Weiner, 2001, p. 200). Emphasizing the importance of Indian input into the design of the federal system, Sarkar (2001, p. 31) also draws attention to the Indian nationalist, Bepinchandra Pal's writing on federation back in 1905 and to the 'discourse of "unity in diversity" that became standard in mature Indian nationalism' and particularly so as Hindu-Muslim conflicts worsened.

The example of federalism with which the designers of the constitution were most impressed was that of Canada (Dasgupta, 2001, p. 54). The Canadian federal system was explicitly designed for diversity in both languages and regions and the prime minister, as head of the federal government had the most powerful role. Though in having a president the Indian system differs from Canada, the role of the president in India is weak. The electoral system chosen was like that in Canada, and in the UK: single-member plurality (or 'first-past-the post'); a system simple to use, simple to understand and simple to operate; the system whereby voters choose from a list just one candidate to represent their district, geographically-defined (Carter et al., 2024, pp. 11–33). Given the determination for universal suffrage, the advantage of the simplicity of the electoral system for a country with such a high level of illiteracy at the time was a sensible choice and one that, through inclusiveness, can also be credited for contributing to the durability of India's democracy.

The design of the Indian federalist system, described as 'flexible rather than rigid' (Thakur, 1995, p. 72), built in the capacity to adjust in response to issues arising not least in respect of the variations between regions. The actions of 'democratic political movements' during the time of transition are credited by Dasgupta (2001, p. 76) for strengthening the resilience of India's federal system and he also argues that the design of the Indian federalist system has continued to promote political participation since independence. In similar vein, along with the bureaucracy and the role of the courts, Katzenstein et al. (2001, p. 268) argue that 'interest-based social movement activism' has played a significant part in safeguarding India's

democracy. Such interest-based movements include Dalit movements (those of the scheduled castes, ex-untouchables), environmental movements and women's movements.

Cultural Attitudes

Dahl's (1989, p. 253) description of India as 'highly traditional and rule-bound in behaviour and beliefs,' influenced, no doubt, by understanding of the caste system and of the Dalits, gives too little recognition to Gandhi's mass campaign, which was so centrally concerned with the Dalits. The 'highly traditional' description also pays too little attention to the importance of social movements since independence and to the changes brought by government in their encouragement of such movements by the Congress Party (once elected to govern) and by governments since. This is an observation that fits with case of Taiwan from 1988. Importantly, unlike the authoritarian party that held power in Taiwan until 1987 and the military regime and then authoritarian party that ruled South Korea until 2000, the Congress Party that was elected to power in India in 1947 was a party committed to Indian socialism, a form viewed as in harmony with Indian traditional culture.

As expressed by Jawaharlal Nehru, who became the first prime minister of independent India, in his *Discovery of India*, published in 1946, the aims of the Congress Party were for Indian socialism, a form special to India but closest to that of social democracy. As Nehru described it in *Discovery of India*: change 'in the direction of a democratic planned collectivism.' The aims involved a mixed economy of private and public ownership (in practice that primarily relating to infrastructure), the ending of unemployment, the freedom to choose one's occupation and 'a progressive tendency' towards equalization of social distinctions and of income. Affirmative action to assist the rise of the lower castes followed. Viewing Indian culture to be less acquisitive than that found in the West, Nehru argued that it is 'to those considered the good and the wise' that 'respect and admiration is given' and 'especially those who sacrifice themselves or what they possess for the public good' (Nehru quotations above are from Weiner, 2001, pp. 215–216). Decades on, Bardhan (2001, p. 226) confirms: 'a large part of mass political culture in India would still be described as having a 'collective passion for group equity' and Weiner (2001, p. 218)

comments that '[T]he cry for "social justice" is as much a demand for respect and equal treatment in ordinary everyday relationships as it is a demand for economic benefits.'

Economic Factors

India has not attained the high levels of economic growth achieved by Taiwan and South Korea; it has not ended poverty but, over time, poverty has been reduced and levels of employment have increased and significantly. From 2012 to 2023 the percentage of people living below the poverty line (4.20 dollars a day) went down from 57.7 percent to 27.7 percent and those living in extreme poverty (3 dollars a day) fell from 27.1 percent to 5.3 percent (World Bank Document, 2025). The adult literacy rate has also risen steadily: at 41 percent in 1981, it reached 82 percent in 2023 (World Bank Data, 2025). Shortly after independence, in 1951, it had been only 17 percent (Thakur, 1995, p. 315).

Where India does compare favourably with South Korea and Taiwan is in respect of the equality of the distribution of wealth as shown by their Gini coefficients – Gini coefficients range from nought percent (total equality) to 100 percent (total inequality). While the most recent score for South Korea is 32.9, in 2021, and that for Taiwan is 34.1, in 2022, for India, in 2022, the score is closer to total equality at 25.5. It is a score, furthermore, comparable to the Scandinavian countries that, because of the rural nature of their societies with independent farmers in the 19th century, Dahl offers as evidence of an MDP society not being necessary for polyarchy. In 2023, the Gini coefficient for Norway was 26.5, for Sweden 29.3 and for Denmark 29.9. (For the Gini Coefficients see Data World Bank [no date] and for Taiwan see Statista [no date-c].)

Rather than 'historically high average levels of wealth, income, consumption, and education' viewed by Dahl (1989, p. 251) as factors qualifying as 'modern' in his MDP society, it would seem that it is not the average but the distribution of wealth, income, consumption and education that is important to the kind of society that is necessary for democracy to be both durable and resilient. Dahl's 'dynamic' aspects of the MDP society as 'economic growth' and 'increasing standards of living' no doubt contribute to the resilience of democracy but the 'collective passion for group equity' in India, highlighted by Bardham (2001, p. 226) is significant. So, too, is

the ‘cry for “social justice”’ being ‘as much a demand for respect and equal treatment in ordinary everyday relationships as it is a demand for economic benefits,’ argued by Weiner (2001, p. 218). Nehru’s view of Indian culture, expressed in his *Discovery of India*, as less acquisitive than that found in the West, and ‘respect and admiration’ being given ‘to those considered the good and the wise’ and ‘especially those who sacrifice themselves or what they possess for the public good,’ also supports the importance of distribution over average wealth and, furthermore, points to factors in society being wider than those restricted to the economy. Such factors, perhaps, are especially important in countries when poorer.

Pluralist Groups

Dahl’s ‘pluralist’ aspect of the MDP society, which he defined as ‘having numerous relatively autonomous groups and organizations, particularly in the economy’ begs the question about the possibility of counting a political system as having a democratic process in the absence of a society with a plethora of independent associations. This is particularly so in respect of the criteria of the democratic process of ‘effective participation,’ ‘enlightened understanding’ and ‘inclusion’ – all three of which, to be satisfied, require ‘associational autonomy,’ number 7 of the political institutions of polyarchy. If ‘relatively autonomous groups and organizations’ are a requirement of the MDP society then this suggests a relationship that is not simply ‘strongly associated’ with representative democracy but essential to it. Furthermore, as both the comparison between South Korea through to 2025 and Taiwan with its growth of spontaneous social movements since 1988 and the history of the Independence Movement and the contribution made by social movements to the resilience of the federal system in India have suggested, it is likely that it is not the independent economic groups and associations that are ‘particularly’ important but, rather, the network of independent social groups and social movements that are of greater importance.

As discussed, writing from direct observation of the workings of democracy in America in the 1830s, de Tocqueville argued for the importance of independent local and regional political associations for

enabling interactions between people and towards the development of a democratic community:

> The legislators of America did not suppose that a general representation of the whole nation would suffice to ward off a disorder at once so natural to the frame of democratic society and so fatal; they also thought that it would be well to infuse political life into each portion of the territory in order to multiply to an infinite extent opportunities of acting in concert for all the members of the community and to make them constantly feel their mutual dependence.
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> *Alexis de Tocqueville,* Democracy in America, Volume Two, *1998 (1840), p. 211*

Appreciative of the American federalist system, de Tocqueville went on to argue for the importance of non-political voluntary associations: those relating to what he termed 'civil life' (1998 [1840], p. 215). He noted that in America in the 1830s:

> Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds, religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive. The Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; in this manner they found hospitals, prisons, and schools.
>
> *Alexis de Tocqueville,* Democracy in America, Volume Two, *1998 (1840), p. 215)*

The observations made by de Tocqueville about democracy in America and the importance of 'civil life,' however, have limitations. His observations were related only to white males, those he termed 'Anglo-Americans,' and not to African-Americans, the large majority of whom were enslaved at that time. It is important to note, also, that his observations on the forming of associations neither applied to Native Americans nor to females, be they Anglo-American, African-American or Native-American. The portrayal of 1830s pluralist America is, therefore, narrowly focused.

Discussed in the context of Mills' (1956) 'power elite' and 'emergent mass society' arguments, the evidence for the United States a century later was very different from that observed by de Tocqueville in the 1830s. As explained, Almond and Verba's (1963) finding was that only 57 percent of American adults belonged to a voluntary organization and of those respondents only around a quarter viewed the organizations to which they belonged as political. As mentioned, too, in both presidential and midterm elections turnout was also low: from the 1950s to the present, ranging between 51.7 percent and 66.2 percent in presidential elections and 36.7 percent and 48.7 percent in midterm elections (Statista, no date-a).

Such low turnout, however, is not the case for all representative democracies and the case of Sweden presents a strong contrast with the United States in the second half of the 20th century through into the 21st century. In so doing, Sweden provides support for de Tocqueville's position. The example of Sweden, one that Dahl offers, because of its rural nature in the 19th century, as evidence against the MDP society being necessary for polyarchy, crucially supports the case for there being a kind of society that is necessary for modern democracy, not an MDP society but, what I term, an Active Society.

Sweden and Active Society

During the 1980s, unlike the case of the United States, 80 percent of adult Swedes were members of one or more voluntary association: the highest of these was membership of a trade union of which nearly half of all adult Swedes were members; sports clubs came second followed by consumer cooperatives and then by political parties or their related associations such as youth groups; furthermore, a quarter of the adult population were members of political parties (Milner, 1990, p. 70). In contrast to US presidential and midterm elections with turnouts from the 1950s to the present never reaching higher than 66.2 percent and 48.7 percent respectively, in Sweden, in the 1982 General Election the turnout was 91.4 percent and in local elections (for municipal councils and county councils) it was 90 percent (Milner, 1990, pp. 75–76). Both turnout at elections and levels of participation in society, furthermore, have remained high in Sweden.

Never lower than 80 percent since the 1970s, in the 2018 parliamentary election 87 percent of the Swedish electorate cast their vote and, at 84.2 percent, the turnout was only marginally lower in 2022 (Statista, no date-b). In respect of levels of participation in civil society, in 2019, 75.9 percent of Swedes over 16 years of age were members of at least one voluntary association with more than half of adult Swedes recorded as regular volunteers. Membership of voluntary association is encouraged in Sweden by freedom of association being protected in the Constitution and state-funded grants being available to civil society associations (European Civic Forum, 2022).

By some, principally those opposed to social democracy, Sweden is thought of as a country with a strong state and one that, in consequence, saps initiative from citizens. The social and political history of Sweden reveals the very opposite to be the case. Swedish citizens waited neither for the state nor for private markets to provide but, instead, formed associations which became a network of intermediate associations that acted as a 'buffer zone' (Milner 1990, p. 74) to the state. In time, voluntary organizations succeeded in benefitting from public funds that were usually administered at the local level. For some things the state then took on the role of provider but it was citizens' initiatives in coming together to take concerted action that led to common interests being served.

The result in Sweden has been a strong welfare state paid for with high local and state taxes. The welfare state relates to the provision of health, education, housing, sickness benefits, pensions, child care and child allowances and maternity benefits. For example, sickness benefits in the 1980s, were at 90 percent of income (Milner, 1990, p. 191). Crucially, the purpose of Sweden's welfare state is to ensure sufficient economic equality to assist the disadvantaged (for example those in poor-health) and not just so that they do not end their lives in poverty and with poor housing but 'to facilitate active participation in community life' (Milner, 1990, p. 193). In Sweden, Milner (1990, pp. 189–190) explains, welfare is viewed in terms of 'one's command over resources with which one can direct one's own life.' It is this that offers the strongest explanation of the continuing high membership of independent organizations in Sweden. The advantages of having such 'command over resources' with which to 'direct one's own life' also offers explanation for why it was among Anglo-American males that de Tocqueville observed such a flourishing network of associations.

It is significant to note, too, that not only had Sweden a history of action in concert to form voluntary associations but, back in the seventeenth century, the percentage of the population, both men and women, who had basic reading ability came close to 100 percent and, by 1850, with schools in every town and village, all Swedes could both read and write (Milner, 1990, p. 51). The case of Sweden also, therefore, provides support for the importance for democracy of universal education in enabling and encouraging effective participation.

It is also significant to note that in a survey of 9,894 people across nine western countries (Croatia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, UK, US) carried out by Ipsos in September 2025, only Sweden had a majority of respondents who were satisfied with the way that democracy was working in their country. At 65 percent in Sweden, this contrasts with 20 percent in the United States and 26 percent in the UK, with Poland, the second highest at 40 percent, fully 25 percentage points behind Sweden's score. Furthermore, Sweden was also the only country in the survey not worried about democracy in their country in the next five years (Ipsos, 2025). As in the case of India, the case of Sweden supports the view that explanation for the strength and resilience of democracy lies in the more equal distribution of wealth in society and where there is participation in community action.

Action in Concert

The lesson drawn by de Tocqueville from early-19th century America and today demonstrated by the case of Sweden is that in order to enable two of Dahl's criteria of democracy – effective participation and inclusion – it is necessary for citizens to take concerted action. Necessary, that is, for citizens to join in action in pursuit of common interests. Necessary and not just a strong association, as Dahl argued in respect of the pluralist aspect of the modern dynamic pluralist (MDP) society. Pluralist that is, however, in the sense not of 'numerous relatively autonomous groups and organizations, particularly in the economy,' as Dahl (1989, p. 251) argues, but in the sense of acting in concert as theorized not only by de Tocqueville but also by Arendt and Luxemburg: political thinkers who were also political activists.[6]

In Arendt's view action is more than citizens joining together in de Tocqueville's sense of 'acting in concert for all the members of the community and to make them constantly feel their mutual independence' (de Tocqueville, 1998 [1840], p. 211). And it is more than politics of the local community and the non-political voluntary associations of 'civil life' and the founding of 'hospitals, prisons and schools' (de Tocqueville, 1998 [1840], p. 215). For Arendt (1973, p. 84), action is not only joining together and founding 'lasting institutions,' it is also the kind of joining together that she saw in the US civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement: the joining together of those lacking power to challenge the political order of those who do hold power and doing so through the use of non-violent methods (Canovan, 1992, p. 147).

The acting in concert of the kind that Arendt cites, the US civil rights movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement, is the kind of concerted action that was also present in the non-violent-campaign headed by Gandhi in India, the peaceful collective action taken by the Russian petitioners in 1905 and the Chartist petitioners in 1839, 1842 and 1848, in the civil rights activists in Northern Ireland before power was drained from them in the violent action that developed into the Troubles, in the protest movements that culminated in the June Struggle in Taiwan and the protests in South Korea, December 2024 to January 2025. In such cases, Arendt argues that power 'springs up in between' those joining in action together (cited in Canovan, 1992, p. 208) and highlights action in concert in the maintenance of democratic governments:

> All political institutions are manifestations and materialisations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the power of the people ceases to uphold them.
>
> *Hannah Arendt, On Violence, 1970, p. 140*

Arendt's view of the importance of people's action in concert as essential to the upholding of democratic political institutions has similarities with that of Luxemburg who viewed spontaneous concerted action as the 'life blood' of democracy. In her criticism of Lenin abolishing the Constituent Assembly and instituting single party rule in the Russian Revolution, 1917, she argued:

> [T]he more democratic the institutions, the livelier and stronger the pulse-beat of the political life of the masses, the more direct and complete is their influence.
>
> *Rosa Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution, 1967, p. 62*

The action in concert with which Luxemburg was especially concerned was that of the importance of the mass strike through which workers could, through the spontaneity of their collective action, generate the power to improve their working conditions and achieve a better, more equal, more just and fairer society. Such spontaneous action she saw, also, as the means to achieve such a society through revolution but, as the above quotation suggests, she was an advocate of social democracy with active mass support and rejected revolutionary change being imposed from above (see O'Kane, 2015).

Along with the Russian petitioners in 1905, and also in line with the Chartist petitioners and the civil rights activists in Northern Ireland and the United States, Luxemburg argued not only for active participation, including the rights to vote and to take strike action, but also for fairer and more equal social and economic conditions. Such conditions she viewed as needed in order to empower people through experience of participation. Encouragement of participation in spheres other than the political as a means by which people can learn the benefits of participation in democracy has also been made for the case of workers' participation in factories (Pateman, 1970). Recognizing the relationship between economic and political equality Dahl (1989, p. 328), too, went on to argue for the benefits of the democratic process to be extended to the internal governments of economic enterprises.

As the example of Sweden has shown, however, workers' participation in factories is not enough. Citizens include not only those who work in factories or firms of a size where the benefits of large-scale participation can be experienced. Citizens, furthermore, are not only those who carry out paid work of any kind. Citizens also include the retired and the sick, women on maternity leave, mothers and fathers who do not go out to work but stay at home to look after their children or to care for old or sick members of their families and, not least, those who are handicapped in such ways that they cannot work whether in factories or elsewhere.

Acting in concert is not simply about participating in political institutions and associations, whether local or central, and voting in elections. Neither does it require every citizen to be actively participating in politics and certainly not for all or most of the time. Rather, it is about the joining together to take action in cooperation between citizens: action that can be spontaneous or organized; in pursuit of the furtherance of the group's own interests or on behalf of others and for the community.

Spontaneous action can lead, though not necessarily, to the setting up of future associations. If the action is organized, whether within existing associations or through the formation of new associations, the organizations may become permanent or dissolve and, sometimes lead to the forming of new campaigns and organizations including political parties. The Chartist movement and the US civil right movements are two such examples as, too, are Taiwan's social movements from 1980. Another example is Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign and Congress becoming a modern political party. So, too, the protest movement that campaigned for Britain to leave the European Union, which was first promoted by the United Kingdom Independence Party, UKIP, and was succeeded by the Brexit Party and, in time, the Reform Party.

Action in concert is a necessary aspect of a society for representative democracy. Where interests are being satisfactorily served, evidence of a thriving representative democracy, though showing healthy examples of participation and the existence of independent voluntary associations and multiple political parties, would not, necessarily, be one bursting with active participation of the spontaneous kind. It is also the case that participation in the form of non-violent collective action that was met by violence could be evidence of the absence of representative democracy or of a representative democracy being under threat or of its being in the process of breaking down.

Active Society

That the MDP society is not necessary as a precondition for the presence of the seven institutions of the democratic process does not rule out that some kind of society is necessary for modern, representative, democracy. As the examples of Sweden and India have suggested, it could be a society that

focuses not on high average levels of wealth, income, consumption and education but on the more equal distribution of wealth education and welfare. That is to say a society in which the gap between rich and poor and that between differences of educational attainment are not wide and narrow over time. It could also be a society, as the cases of Sweden and India and Taiwan, too, have shown, in which not simply voluntary associations and independent organizations are present but where 'action in concert' takes place in the broadest sense of including social and political movements, and where economic organizations are not concentrated in the hands of the few but are widespread, including through shareholdings, and where governments play an enabling, promoting and supporting part.

It needs also to be recognized that some characteristics of an Active Society may be particularly relevant in the early years of the construction of the institutions of representative democracy and others in later years. The implementation of policies would take time to accomplish and to become embedded and, therefore, a perfect correlation between society and the construction of political institutions and processes could not be expected. Returning to the example of universal education paid for by the state, which was one of the 'needs' listed in the 1905 Russian Petition, universal education clearly is a policy that would take time to implement and even more time for the target of a fully educated population to be reached. In the early years after the introduction of the policy, the presence of the institutions of polyarchy, therefore, would not necessarily be expected to be correlated with high general levels of education. High levels of education would, however, be necessary for those institutions actually to be fulfilling the criteria of a democratic process at its highest level, not least Dahl's 'effective participation' and 'enlightened understanding.'

Conclusion

Representative democracy cannot be understood simply as a set of political institutions. Necessary though they are they are not sufficient. There is a kind of society which is also necessary and which together with the set of political institutions constitutes modern representative democracy in its highest-attainable form. It is a society in which the distribution of income, the universal advantages of education and a system of welfare are such that

citizens are enabled to participate in community life. It is a society in which citizens have not only the capabilities but also the freedom to take non-violent concerted action without being met by violence and, not least the violence of the state coercive forces.

A democratic society is important because, as Dahl (1989, p. 252) argues in respect of the MDP society, 'it fosters attitudes and beliefs favourable to democratic ideas' but the democratic society must additionally be one that fosters behaviour in its citizens: behaviour that favours, supports and nourishes representative democracy; behaviour engendered through the experience of cooperation and compromise in the forming and participation within voluntary associations and also in coming together in concerted action. It must not simply be a democratic society; it must be an Active Society.

Notes

1. Dahl (1989, p. 254) also adds the example of Yugoslavia in the 1980s. A country of six republics that suffered severe economic decline in the 1980s, descended into internal wars and then broke up into six independent countries in the 1990s, it is not a case suitable for examining the MDP society–polyarchy relationship. ⏎
2. It is worth noting, too, that Ahn (1997) challenges the portrayal, accepted by Dahl, of South Korea as having high economic growth and a relatively equal distribution of income in the 1980s. Engaging in detailed and sophisticated analysis of the official statistics he finds income distribution in the 1980s 'unequal and worsening' (Ahn, 1997, p. 8). ⏎
3. Indira Ghandi was assassinated in 1984; her son, Rajiv Gandhi who was elected into power after her assassination and served until 1989 was himself assassinated, in 1991, during an election campaign. ⏎
4. *Satyagraha* is a Sanskrit word which literally means insistence on truth: in Gandhi's words 'pure soul-force' (Pandey, 1979, pp. 49–50). Gandhi's philosophy combines religion and politics: he believed political and social action to be a religious duty and also a moral duty. He therefore viewed political action as a means for both individual and

societal liberation as of importance greater than that of India's political independence (Ardley, 2002, pp. 95–96). ⏎

5. Low salaries later opened the way to bribery and, in line with Weber's expectations, red tape led to inefficiencies of outcome; during the Emergency there were political appointments to the bureaucracy, which were later replaced (Thakur, 1995, pp. 176–182). ⏎
6. Hannah Arendt was actively involved in the Zionist movement in opposition to the Nazi regime in Germany and, as a refugee, continued her political activity in France. Following escape to the United States she continued campaigning through her writings. She was opposed to the factions of Zionism that sought a Jewish State in Palestine without seeking accommodation with resident Arabs (see Canovan, 1992, pp. 8–11). Rosa Luxemburg was actively involved in the German Social Democratic Party, SPD: the same German SPD, that is, which Michels (1968) used as his critical case in his theory of oligarchy in political parties. She was also active in support, in Poland, for the failed Russian Revolution of 1905–1906 that broke out after the 1905 Russian Petition procession and, in Germany, in the failed revolution, October 1918 to January 1919, which led to her murder (O'Kane, 2015). ⏎

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Practical-Ideal

INTRODUCTION

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Through pursuit of the requirements for representative democracy, as asked for by the *Wanting Democracy* cases and viewed in the light of the lessons drawn from the Democracy Wanting theories and from democracy as a process in Dahl's 'real world,' along with lessons drawn from comparison of additional cases – South Korea, Taiwan, India and Sweden – a practical-ideal of representative democracy has emerged that goes beyond political institutions and into the fabric of society through to the behaviour of citizens.

Though in line with the view stated by the Chartists and J. S. Mill, that democracy is a good thing and in accord with all the cases of those seeking representation within representative democracy that have been discussed, the proposed practical-ideal of democracy is not based on moral arguments. The proposed practical-ideal is based on logic – logic that follows from what is wanted by those who have campaigned for it; logic that takes into account what is possible within practical constraints; logic that follows from the necessity to build in safeguards that limit and control power. In simple terms, the practical-ideal of representative democracy is proposed as the best system for facilitating the representation of different opinions and interests that it can be in practice.

Not a static view of democracy in ideal form, the practical-ideal of representative democracy is dynamic in striving, within the constraints presented by incompatible and conflicting interests, costs and time, always to be better at being responsive to citizens in serving their interests and to strengthen safeguards against the inherent threats to democracy to be faced,

in, for example, the institutions of democracy themselves, and to act responsibly for the community as times change.

14
PRACTICAL-IDEAL

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The requests and requirements generated from the *Wanting Democracy* cases – the Chartist and the 1905 Russian petitions, the Northern Ireland and US civil rights movements and the debate and outcome of the UK referendum on membership of the EU – have shown why representative democracy will never be met fully in practice. In addition to the problem caused by diverse interests that are incompatible and sometimes in direct conflict, there are problems of cost constraints and time limits that need to be faced. Budgetary constraints can result in interests not being met sufficiently and, with other promised policies sometimes needing to take precedence, perhaps not be met at all. Similarly, time restrictions, such as those presented by the allowed term of a parliament or the urgency of the problem needing to be addressed, may lead to actions being taken based on inadequate evidence or insufficient consideration of interests. In consequence, mistakes will sometimes be made in the drawing up of policies and also in their implementation.

Consideration of the result of the 2016 EU referendum has served to draw attention to further problems in 'reality' matching the 'ideal' – problems faced such as interpreting 'majority' when there is a low turnout of voters, the vote scores being close and the winner having less than 50 percent of the support of those eligible to vote. The conduct of the referendum also highlighted the additional difficulties of providing information of sufficient quantity and quality and the need for enough time between the announcement of a referendum or election and its taking place.

Comparisons made between the United States and Sweden have also shown that allowing social and economic inequalities that hinder access to information and education to persist is associated with low levels of participation and it follows that not all interests will be represented.

The theories in *Democracy Wanting*, of Weber, Michels, Mills and Marx, highlighted further reasons why democracy in theory can never be met in practice. These were problems from within political institutions: problems theorized to undermine democracy even to the point of ceasing to count as democracy. Though each theory differed in focus – whether on bureaucracy, political parties, political organization, government itself or the wider state – a common view emerged that rather than representing the interests of those intended to be served, namely the interests of citizens, the interests served are of those holding power and, importantly, these included those who are unelected and in positions of power including outside of government altogether. The theories contended that the governments of representative democracies serve the interests of groups privileged by wealth, through ownership of capital or control of large corporations, and social position or organizational leadership positions, including those in the bureaucracy and those with control of the media. Furthermore, this was argued sometimes to be the case even to the point of citizens' interests and opinions being replaced by received opinion or governments serving interests that were in direct opposition to the interests of the community.

Critical assessment of the 'iron law of oligarchy' (Michels, 1968) brought further emphasis to the point that political parties that form governments in representative democracies must serve not just the members of their party, nor even only those who elected them into power but must serve the best interests of the community as a whole, which includes those who voted against the government that formed and those who did not vote at all. Representatives are not simply delegates. In practice, some trade-off between ideology and vote-getting will occur, for political parties may need to adapt or adjust their original ideologies in order to gain votes with the aim of forming or being part of the formation of the next government so to fulfil at least some of their promised policies.

In recognition that governments cannot achieve all that they promise and that, therefore, not fulfilling all promises is an inherent aspect of representative democracy, Dahl's approach to democracy in the 'real world' was then assessed and, from the lessons so concluded together with lessons

learnt from additional cases – India, South Korea, Taiwan and Sweden – modern, representative democracy as a 'practical-ideal' is proposed.

Modern Representative Democracy as Practical-Ideal

A practical-ideal is not democracy as an ideal: what it ought to look like; a construct based, like J. S. Mill's (1861), on moral arguments. A practical-ideal follows the logic of what is wanted by those who campaign for it in the realm of what is possible within practical constraints. Put simply, the practical-ideal of representative democracy is the best system for facilitating the representation of different opinions and interests that it can be in practice. Though, in line with the clear statements made by the Chartists and J. S. Mill, democracy is viewed as a good thing, the practical-ideal of democracy is constructed not on arguments about what it ought to be like but through representative democracy's logical requirements. These requirements are for what is wanted by citizens and the good of the community, for the necessity to build in safeguards that limit and control power, and for the recognition of unavoidable practical constraints.

Rather than constructed to achieve organizational efficiency, as is Weber's (1991) ideal-type of bureaucracy, the practical-ideal of representative democracy is logically constructed to pursue efficiency of outcome – outcome being, as best as practically possible, to serve and further the different and diverse interests of citizens and of the community as a whole. Like Weber's concept of an ideal type and Dahl's concept of polyarchy, the practical-ideal can be used as a comparative device both to consider changes over time and similarities and differences between cases.

In place of a static view of democracy in ideal form, the practical-ideal of representative democracy is dynamic in that it strives always to be better at being responsive to citizens in serving their interests and to act responsibly for the community as times change.

In a large and complex society, democracy as a practical-ideal – the best, that is, that representative democracy can be in reality – is a representative political system that, following Sartori (1987), values diversity and difference and, so, strives to its utmost to serve the complex and multiple

interests of citizens and of the community. This involves not just shaping the right policies and having the finances and the administrative network and so on to ensure that they are put into effect; it is also a matter of the political system having effective means to find those interests out and a matter of those citizens, too, having effective means to express them and to convey them in such a way that the government does find them out and acts upon them having found them out. The practical-ideal of representative democracy, therefore, necessarily has institutions and procedures set up for the purpose of ascertaining, representing and serving interests, but that is not all.

Not only must the practical-ideal of representative democracy have necessary institutions and procedures to serve the democratic process, it must also have a society that is suitable for getting interests heard and acted on. And not only that, the practical-ideal of democracy must also have safeguards for limiting and controlling power. It is because representative democracy is a system of indirect democracy, citizens exercising power through representatives, that power can be abused and it is why, therefore, safeguards are needed to curb and manage power. As Sartori (1987, p. 280) argues, 'indirect democracy largely amounts to a system of limitation and control of power.'

Drawing on the lessons learnt from discussion of the *Wanting Democracy* cases, from the critical considerations made of the *Democracy Wanting* theories, from the recognition of the practical and theoretical reasons why reality can never match the ideal and building on the construction of democracy in the 'real world,' the necessary and sufficient conditions of the practical-ideal of representative democracy fall under the following headings: 'Elections and Voting;' 'Parts and Political Parties;' 'Rights and Freedoms;' 'Rule of Law not State Violence;' 'Neutral Bureaucracy;' 'Active Society;' and 'Cooperation and Compromise.'

Together these seven conditions constitute: a representative democratic process; the provision of means to limit and control power; and a kind of society that provides conditions under which representative democracy can be sustained and flourish.

Elections and Voting

Elections and voting are necessary in the design of the political institutions of democracy for the representation of diverse interests. They are also required as the means for the choosing, removal and replacing of governments and representatives. In addition, they reveal the ratios of support for political parties and their policies and policy programmes or referendum questions and, by so doing, can play an important part in moderating opinion through providing evidence of where and with what strength support lies. As Kautsky (1902, p. 171) argued, elections 'grant the possibility that the opponents will themselves recognize the untenability of many positions and freely surrender them' but, as the Troubles in Northern Ireland showed, too, there is no guarantee that positions will be 'freely' surrendered when strongly held and in direct conflict of interests.

Elections and voting as a means to moderate opinion and also to inform governments of the likely balance of opinions also contributes to the capacity of governments of representative democracy to carry out their necessary role in sometimes representing the community's interests before citizens are able to be consulted or even, perhaps, have time to become aware of their best interests and, so, also, outside of intense, unbargainable situations such as those faced in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, to balance minority and majority interests and diverse opinions. It is no surprise, therefore, that Dahl (1989) has 'Voting Equality' as the first of his five ideal standards of the democratic process and that the first four of his seven institutions of democracy in the real world relate to elections and electoral rules ('Elected officials,' 'Free and fair elections,' 'Inclusive suffrage,' 'Right to run for office').

Elections and voting are essential to representative democracy and not only at the general level but also at the local level and yet deeper into society, where they are commonly exercised in voluntary associations and a variety of organizations and institutions including in the economy. Elections and voting are necessary for the purpose of representing interests wherever interests are not all and always the same. They are necessary for choosing representative executives and officials and, so, governing bodies in any democratic organization and for providing the opportunity, if the governing body's decisions and actions are later judged by the members to have been inadequate or simply wrong, for the governing body to be removed and replaced. In being the means both to choose and reject representatives and also the means through which governments and governing bodies are

chosen and changed elections play a crucial part not only in relation to Dahl's (1989, p. 108) 'ideal standards' of the democratic process but also in respect of Sartori's (1987, p. 280) 'limitation and control of power.' As such, they are invaluable in countering tactics, such as those of the threat to resign or the playing off of the supporters of one leader against those of another as argued by Michels (1968), used by leaders to stay in power and represent their own interests over those who they have been elected to represent.

Though necessary, simply holding elections is not sufficient for a political system to count towards classification as a representative democracy. As the Chartists and the Russian 1905 petitions made clear, the elections would, at the least, also need to be conducted on the basis of universal suffrage, have secret ballots and equal-counting votes through devices such as constituencies being of similar size. As the Northern Ireland and the United States civil rights cases further demonstrated, they should also not involve contrivances such as plural votes and literacy tests for they contravene the necessary feature of representative democracy of votes counting equally. Discussion of the additional demands made by the Chartist petitions further highlighted that elections would need to be held regularly and not spaced too far apart, and the elected representatives would have to be salaried and without there being any property requirement for becoming a candidate for election in order to ensure that voters could be represented by people like themselves who understood their interests well.

In addition, discussion of the UK referendum of 2016 showed how voting can be a useful device in representative democracies for providing citizens with a chance to influence a policy directly. What was also shown by the case, however, was that because referendums are normally held on yes/no or pro/anti issues they have the potential for debates around the referendum question to harden positions and, so, exacerbate division rather than a) reduce it and b) resolve the issue, and this may be more likely when the result is close. In consequence, referendums are best as a device not for the exercise of power by citizens in deciding policy directly but as a means for the limitation and control of the government's power through influence in government policy decisions.

Parts and Political Parties

In line with Sartori's (1987) 'parts that become parties,' discussion of the Chartist and Russian petition cases signalled that, if interests were to be represented and served, then elections would need to involve competing political parties offering polices that reflect different interests or different combinations of interests. Having the vote if there are no parties that offer policies to represent the voter's interests would serve no representative democratic purpose. It is because not all interests are the same and opinions are diverse that it is essential that representative democracy has more than one party. Competition for votes by parties provides a mechanism for ensuring that policies to represent interests are offered. The parties would not, however, have each to represent a separate, different interest, they could also, and mostly more wisely for gaining enough votes for getting elected, offer polices across a range of interests.

Consideration of the kinds of parties representing interests in competition for votes at elections raised the possibility of the different types of government that might emerge. For instance, voters choosing between two parties each representing a broad range of interests would lead to the formation of a government consisting entirely of the party that gained the majority of seats in the election; the existence of multiple parties each representing narrower ranges of interests would produce governments consisting of coalitions of parties. It follows that rather than the institutions and rules of representative democracies being expected to be exactly the same, it would be appropriate for the institutions and the rules of each representative political system to be chosen and develop so as to be best able to represent the number and nature of the differences and divergences of views and interests in the community. To respect, thereby, that countries differ. The case of India, with its multiple social cleavages and regional variances, illustrated the value of the choice made not simply for a federalist system but one that is responsive to changes as and when needed.

A lesson drawn from comparison of the US and Northern Ireland civil rights cases was that in representative democracies political parties that are elected into power as the single party of government should, as in the US case of the Democrat and Republican parties, be ones that attract votes from multiple groups in society and not ones, like the Ulster Unionist Party, Uup, in Northern Ireland, that attract votes only from one group in society and that, with their guaranteed majority, would be able to rule for as long as 50 years. Governments formed from coalitions of parties could provide a way

to accommodate parties representing the interests of a single group but only if such parties are willing to share power in coalition governments: parties, that is, unlike the Democratic Unionist Party, DUP, of Northern Ireland whose unwillingness, along with that of its supporters, to share power contributed to negotiated peace not returning to Northern Ireland for 30 years. Parties and their supporters being willing, when the election results require it, to share power is essential for the stability of representative democracy.

The existence of two or more political parties willing to share power if the election results require it and which offer competing policies and, in a two-party system do not appeal only to one group, though necessary, is not, however, enough for representative democracy. As Michels (1968) argued, organizational and psychological factors within political parties and also within other political organizations have the potential to lead to the separation of leaders such that they represent their own interests over those of their members, their voters and the wider community. In response to the tactics used to retain their leadership positions that Michels claimed (manipulating the party finances, controlling the party press, threatening to resign and playing off the support for one leader against another), safeguards would be needed.

As argued, safeguards against leaders furthering their interests over those of their members and, in the case of political parties, of their voters and, in the case of parties in government, of the community as a whole, can come from within the political organizations themselves. Appropriate rules and procedures set down within each party or political organization could work towards the limitation and control of party leaders: rules such as rotating leadership or procedures involving strong mass participation. Importantly, too, regular elections, both general and local and within party organizations and political organizations, also play a role in countering the tactics used to keep leaders in power. The presence of multiple sources of information and outlets for expressions of opinion, too, act to counter such tactics, particularly in respect to the political party or organization controlling its own press and keeping party finances closed to scrutiny.

The importance for representative democracy of multiple sources of information and outlets for expressions of opinion highlights not only the necessity for more than one party offering choices of policies to compete in elections but also the importance of ‘parts.’ Not only, that is, Sartori’s ‘parts

that become parties' but also independent political organizations and associations that lobby for interests, gather information and present it not only to governments and parties but also to the press and other media outlets. Representative democracy relies on and thrives through its 'parts,' which serve not only the representation of interests but also serve as one of the safeguards against the 'iron law of oligarchy' even as it threatens within each of the political organizations and associations themselves.

In short, the safeguards provided by two or more political parties each offering a variety of differing policies and policy programmes competing in elections together with multiple sources of information and freedom for expression of opinion are necessary both for the facilitation of representation and for the limitation and control of power.

Rights and Freedoms

In their People's Charter, 1842, the Chartists saw representative democracy as not simply a matter of a parliament and fair and regular elections. The petitioners made clear that representative democracy also requires political rights and freedoms:

> [I]t is the undoubted constitutional right of people, to meet freely, when, how, and whether they choose, in public places, peaceably, in the day, to discuss their grievances and political or other subjects, or for the purpose of framing, discussing, or passing any vote, petition, or remonstrance, upon any subject whatsoever.
>
> *Chartist Petition 1842*

To these rights and freedoms of speech and assembly the Russian Petition of 1905 made explicit that this included freedom of the press and listed yet further such 'needs': 'freedom and inviolability of the person, freedom of speech, press, association, and worship.' These rights and freedoms set out by the Chartist and Russian petitioners fit with Dahl's (1989) criteria of the democratic process of 'effective participation' and 'enlightened understanding' and with the remaining three institutions of 'freedom of expression,' 'alternative information' and 'associational autonomy.'

The Russian petitioners also made clear in respect of 'worship' the need for the 'separation of the church from the state' (Russian Petition 1905). It

was a view found, too, in comments made in the 1842 Chartist Petition about the enforced ‘compulsory support of religious creeds, and expensive church establishments, with which the people do not agree.’ The importance of freedom of conscience fits with the importance not simply of differences of interests and opinions being valued in representative democracy but with the fundamental importance of the value given to diversity.

In addition, the Russian Petition of 1905 included as needs the right to strike, involvement in war to be only with citizens’ consent, freedom from violence and insult, and universal education paid for by the state. The Russian petitioners also made the case for security of income to be provided by state insurance to support those unable to work for reasons relating, for example, to sickness or age. The 1842 Chartist Petition, too, requested ‘provision made for the poor, the aged and the infirm.’ Such conditions were found, at their best, in the case of Sweden and its association with the satisfaction of representative democracy shown through comparison with the United States.

With respect to the freedoms of speech, the press and of assembly, Mills (1956), however, argued that the development of media technology had distracted the mass of the population such that opinions were no longer independently formed. Democracy’s goal of serving citizens’ interests and those of the community as a whole is under serious threat if citizens are deprived of full and unbiased information on which to formulate their interests.

Modern media has the capacity to distract and, furthermore to be used for propaganda and to undermine true stories through the promotion of conspiracy theories and claims about reality being ‘fake news.’ Nevertheless, mass media retains valuable potential as a means in representative democracy for conveying information and facilitating informed participation. Furthermore, modern media technology can also provide a means for the limitation and control of power through being used by movements and pressure groups to encourage debate, to motivate and coordinate participation, to develop interests and to convey information that challenges the dominant view. As the examples of the US civil rights movement and the Black Lives Matter movement have shown, television news broadcasts and videos filmed on citizens’ phones have also played a strong part in drawing attention to violence and police brutality.

In sum, freedom of speech, of conscience, of the press and other media as well as freedom from state violence together with the rights of assembly, to form associations and to strike are necessary in order to encourage debate, convey information that challenges the dominant view, to inform participation and, not least, to safeguard against misinformation and the hindrance of independently formed opinions.

Rule of Law Not State Violence

The Chartist and Russian petitions argued that representative democracy requires the law to apply equally and fairly to all citizens. Complaining bitterly of the treatment meted out to the Chartists arrested in Newport, including accusations of trial by 'packed juries' and the '500 well disposed persons' being 'treated as felons of the worst description,' the 1842 Petition stated that the petitioners 'viewed with great indignation the partiality shown to the aristocracy in the courts of justice, and the cruelty of that system of law.' The police force was also accused of being 'unconstitutional' and having been set up to prevent the due exercise of the people's rights 'to meet freely' and to discuss and to frame their interests. The Russian petitioners felt so strongly about the arrest and imprisonment suffered by those who had earlier sought for improvements in their working conditions that the very first 'need' listed in their petition was for 'The immediate release and return home of those who suffered for their political and religious convictions, for strikes and peasant disorders' (Russian Petition 1905). Under the same heading in the Russian petition of 'Measures against the ignorance of the people and against their lack of rights,' needs listed also included 'responsibility of the ministers before the people and guarantees that the government will act according to the law' and 'equality of all before the law without any exceptions.'

The US and Northern Ireland civil rights cases, which took place in countries generally thought of as mature representative democracies, confirmed the lessons drawn from the Chartist and Russian petition cases about the need for equality before the law and for all to be treated with respect. In addition, the two civil rights cases demonstrated the importance for the operation of representative democracy of control of the police and the army such that they operate through the rule of law – law which has the consent of citizens – and not through the use of violence: not least, violence

wrought on peaceful demonstrations. Trust and confidence in the police is necessary in a representative democracy. This is a lesson confirmed by the case of South Korea after 1987 as compared with that of Taiwan from the same year.

The cases both of the United States and of Northern Ireland further highlighted that prejudicial differences in the application of law and treatment applies not only to classes, as found in the petition cases, but also to differences based on race, religion and nationality. The demand only for male suffrage in the Chartist petitions additionally highlights lack of equality on the basis of sex. The racial segregation laws in America demonstrated that inequality established in law is antipathetic to representative democracy, a political system in which all citizens are to be treated equally.

The practical-ideal of representative democracy should, therefore, not simply have law applied equally and fairly to all citizens: trust and confidence in the police and the nature of the law itself are also crucial. Laws that are prejudicial to groups involving characteristics or behaviours that cannot be changed such as race, sex, sexuality, nationality, disability and religion are incompatible with representative democracy. As argued both by Marx and Weber coercion is an inherent characteristic of the state and it is essential, therefore, that consideration of laws, the conduct of the police and of the judiciary, the nature of sentences and the conditions of prisons are taken into account not only with respect to equality, fairness and justice of treatment but also in respect of the limitation and control of power.

Neutral Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy, too, is a crucial part of the state. The lesson on the importance of the nature of bureaucracy for representative democracy was first noted through the contrast drawn between the two petition cases. In Tsarist Russia, the bureaucracy was corrupt and arbitrary in its carrying out of duties and served not the interests of citizens but the interests of the bureaucrats and the despotic power of the tsar. The lesson drawn was that the kind of bureaucracy necessary for representative democracy was one that would not be corrupt and would serve the interests of citizens fairly, equally and justly through the application of rules and laws agreed by

elected representative government and with the consent of citizens. The importance of these lessons was also found in the US and Northern Ireland civil rights cases where, respectively, racial and religious groups were treated prejudicially by not only laws, police and judiciary but also by the bureaucracy.

Both Weber (1991) and Mills (1956) confirmed the importance of the nature of the bureaucracy for representative democracy. They each argued, that to be at its most effective and organizationally efficient the bureaucracy needed for representative democracy should be a 'civil service': that is, a neutral, permanent, career bureaucracy. Such a bureaucracy has been highlighted as contributing to the resilience of India's democracy (Katzenstein et al., 2001). Specifically, Weber and Mills argued such a bureaucracy would be rule-following and hierarchical with a career structure and selection based on appropriate, objective qualifications and promotion based on examinations, with those at the top of the hierarchy having more responsibility than those at the bottom with grades in between and a transparent salary structure in accordance with responsibilities. Such a bureaucracy would also undertake proper and accurate record-keeping with multiple copies in appropriate files both to prevent arbitrariness and to run smoothly.

Mills (1956) argued for the critical importance of the integrity of the state bureaucracy and stressed the importance of its neutrality, which, crucially, required the bureaucracy remaining in place at each election to serve whichever government was elected rather than, as in the case of the United States, changing through the appointment of 'key officials' with each new government. The effect, of this, Mills argued, played an important part in the rise of a 'power elite' in which the unelected had more power than the elected and the interests served were those of the power elite and not those of the whole community. Crucially, therefore, the 'neutral' bureaucracy he proposed was necessary for the limitation and control of power as well as for effective, objective administration.

Weber argued, however, that even such a 'civil service' has a tendency to grow unnecessarily in size, to hinder policy implementation through red tape, to become unresponsive and to become secretive. Yet even more problematic for representative democracy, he argued that bureaucracy also has a tendency (even without the key political appointments later highlighted by Mills) to usurp power from elected governments and, rather

than serving the interests of citizens, to serve the interests of the bureaucracy. A century later, those opposed to the UK's membership of the European Union made similar accusations about 'undemocratic' bureaucratic rule.

Weber sought to limit and control the growth of bureaucracy, its secretiveness and tendency to usurp the power of the elected government through having the right kind of political system. His solution was plebiscitary democracy with charismatic politicians as leaders of mass-membership political parties competing for votes in elections conducted on the basis of universal suffrage. Making the argument that plebiscitary democracy was itself open to political leaders usurping power for themselves, a view also held by Michels and, to a degree, illustrated by Indira Gandhi's calling of the national Emergency, other ways of controlling the power of bureaucracy were suggested. A federalist system with a weak president, as opposed to Weber's preference for a strong president, was viewed as contributing to explanation for the durability of India's democracy. The more general conclusion was that there must be multiple political organizations, including competing political parties, each with their own bureaucracies for generating alternative and multiple sources of information. As a means for safeguarding democracy through the limitation and control of power this is a solution that penetrates into and permeates through society and examples were found not only in longer-lived democracies such as Sweden but also in the newer democracy of Taiwan.

Active Society

The existence of multiple political organizations each with their own bureaucracies and as sources of independent information fits with Dahl's (1989) institution of democracy of 'associational autonomy.' Crucially, it also relates to the nature of society – a society, however, that differs in important ways from Dahl's MDP society and one that rather than being only 'strongly associated' with democracy is necessary for representative democracy in practice. This kind of society is one in which rather than average levels of wealth, income, consumption of goods and education being high, it is the distribution of wealth, education and welfare that is crucial. It is also a society in which not simply voluntary associations and

independent economic organizations are present but where ‘acting in concert’ takes place. It is a society in which democracy is kept alive and dynamic through action and one rich in willingness to engage in cooperation and compromise.

Distribution of Wealth, Education and Welfare

In setting out their requests for representative democracy and the necessity of their inclusion within it the Russian and the Chartist petitioners had made clear not only the essential characteristics of a representative democracy but also the petitioners’ interests and had indicated the kind of legislation that would be required to satisfy and protect their interests. In so doing, they had portrayed the kind of society in which they wished to live: a socially and economically more equal society. For the Chartists it would be a society in which provision would be made for ‘the poor, the aged and the infirm’ and for the Russian petitioners a society with state insurance for workers and universal education paid for by the state.

In their campaigns against discrimination in employment, housing, education and treatment by the police and judiciary the US and Northern Ireland civil rights cases reaffirmed the lessons of the petition cases that representative democracy flourishes in more socially and economically equal societies. Unequal distribution of wealth works against the equal representation of citizens through affecting their political participation in both voluntary associations and their participation in elections. As comparisons made between the cases of the United States and Sweden with respect to turnout at elections, annual incomes and education have shown, power is not diffuse where the distribution of wealth is such that the gap between rich and poor is wide and the distribution of educational attainment is skewed against the poor and in favour of the rich. India’s Gini coefficient on a level similar to that of Sweden highlighted the importance of the distribution of wealth for the resilience of democracy even in so poor a country as India.

As argued in respect of the points generated from the EU debate and the 2016 referendum in the UK, universal education of a generally good level is needed for acquiring and weighing information. Through the reduction in the capacity to access information, participation would also be likely to be reduced by poor levels of education. With alternative information being less

likely to be sourced, general interest in politics and, in turn, the number of citizens willing to put themselves forward as candidates in elections would also be likely to be reduced. This would adversely affect the spread of candidates who could satisfactorily represent different interests.

A similar case to that of education and wealth can be made for the general standard of health and welfare. The lesson drawn from the case of Sweden was that the general welfare of the population is essential in order to ensure citizens have command of sufficient resources to direct their own lives. As Milner (1990, p. 193) explained, the objective of the Swedish welfare system is to ensure a level of economic equality sufficient to help the disadvantaged in order 'to facilitate active participation in community life'. The statistical evidence showed the benefits in turnout at elections and also in high levels of membership of political parties and of independent organizations.

In short, rather than Dahl's (1989, p. 251) focus, in respect of the 'modern' aspect of the MDP society, on 'historically high average levels of wealth, income, consumption, and education' and, in respect of its 'dynamic' aspect, on economic growth, it is the distribution of wealth and income that is crucial. A society, that is, without a wide gap between rich and poor; a society where well-being is not weighted in favour of the rich and where the disadvantaged, such as those in poor physical or mental health, are assisted in their capacity to be active citizens equal with the rest; a society, too, where the distribution of educational attainment is widespread. As illustration, it would be a society without a highly privileged group such as that identified by Mills (1956) in the connection between the Ivy League colleges and the 'power elite' or the *chaebols* in South Korea, or where the manipulated term 'literacy' could be used as a weapon of discrimination against African American voters or differentiation on the basis of religion, as in Northern Ireland, could serve to benefit one group over another.

Dahl rightly observed that agricultural societies and not only industrial societies have been historically associated with democracy. What he failed to take into account, however, were the arguments made by Marx (1867; in Mills, 1963) and Mills (1956), respectively, that industrialization brings benefits primarily to the owners and to the controllers of capital and large organizations and that, in consequence, average scores obscure distributions that are skewed. What he also failed to take into account, as illustrated by

India, is that interpretation of 'wealth' is not everywhere and at all times the same. Citing Nehru's view of Indian culture in 1946 as less acquisitive than that in the West, Weiner (2001, p. 218) re-affirmed the case, commenting, 'the cry for "social justice" is as much a demand for respect and equal treatment in ordinary everyday relationships as it is a demand for economic benefits.'

It is in order to serve the objectives of the interests of citizens being represented and to achieve limitation and control of power that citizens need to remain active – and not citizens alone, governments too. Governments of representative democracies need to work to ensure that the interests of privileged groups are not better served than those of the community. Voluntary associations need to organize not only in order to protect and further their own interests but also to protect and further the interests of those less fortunate than themselves in their capacity to engage in active participation and to form voluntary organizations.

Voluntary Associations and Action in Concert

In Dahl's MDP society, which he argues to be 'strongly associated' with the democratic process, the 'P', pluralist, Dahl (1989, p. 251) portrays as 'numerous relatively autonomous groups and organizations.' The importance to the kind of society required for representative democracy of pressure groups and multiple political parties follows logically from the plural nature of representative democracy. The importance of voluntary associations and independent groups and organizations also follows from the need, argued above, for multiple bureaucracies and multiple sources of information from those organizations: economic and social and also including the media. These independent organizations and sources of information fit with the rights and freedoms of speech and the press and of assembly. Competing newspapers and other media outlets and competing political associations, including political parties and organizations set up to defend and promote group interests, must also be independent of government and so be able to arise independently.

The argument that has been made, however, is that Dahl had put too much emphasis on the particular importance of such groups and organizations 'in the economy.' Furthermore, the Russian petitioners had argued for representative democratic practices to be carried through into

society. Their specific argument was for workers to be involved in decisions made in their workplaces with workers' representatives elected on to boards for the investigation of complaints. They had also argued for the rights to form producer-consumer cooperatives and for trade unions. In so doing, they pointed to the importance of cooperatives as alternatives to and for competition with privately owned businesses and also for collective organizations to uphold rights.

It is not, simply, such 'autonomous groups and organizations' that are important but, as de Tocqueville argued, it is 'associations of a thousand other kinds' that are crucial, for they provide experience in the practice of 'acting in concert for all the members of the community and to make them constantly feel their mutual independence' (de Tocqueville, 1998 [1840], p. 211).

As the US Civil Rights Movement, NICRA, the Chartist petitioners, the 1905 Russian petitioners, Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March and the civil disobedience campaign, and the June Democratic Struggle in South Korea showed in their coming together in non-violent action, however, emphasis on independent plural groups in society fails to capture fully the importance of citizens acting in concert to challenge the existing order, and sometimes spontaneously. Concerted action, that is, of the kind identified by Arendt (1970, 1973) and Luxemburg (1967) that may or may not become, as Arendt (1973, p. 84) put it, 'lasting institutions.'

Understanding the importance of concerted action is to recognize that democracy – modern, representative democracy – is a political system that has been campaigned for through movements such as those of the Chartists, the Suffragists and the Suffragettes, NICRA and the US civil rights movement, and the Indian National Congress. Importantly, it is also to recognize that the conditions in society of fair distributions of wealth, education and welfare have been developed not simply by representative governments but have been campaigned for through collective action and the formation of independent organizations in society, including newly formed political parties. As illustrated by the history of Sweden, Taiwan from the 1980s, of Congress in India and the trade union movement in Britain and the formation of the Labour Party, it was collective action championing interests that led to the formal establishments of organizations in society and the later implementation of their policies by governments.

Cooperation and Compromise: Society and Government

The practical-ideal of representative democracy is dynamic: kept open and active; capable of adaptation so to reflect changes that take place in society and so best to succeed, over time, in the protection of voter equality and in the representation and furtherance of interests, which also change and develop. Voluntary associations and organizations and protest and social movements are necessary, therefore, for keeping democracy alive. It follows that it needs also to be a society in which there is willingness to compromise and to cooperate and that the relationship with government is reciprocal: there is necessity for political parties that form government also to engage in cooperation and compromise.

The capacity of citizens to come together in non-violent action, to act in accord and to cooperate in the formation or operation of voluntary organizations is necessary not only for the development of democratic attitudes and values but also for practising behaviour favourable to democracy. The importance of cooperation and compromise follows, too, both from the need for the willingness of citizens to understand that governments cannot serve all interests and from the need for their willingness to accept the rule of elected governments for which they did not vote. As the example of the Troubles in Northern Ireland demonstrated, without willingness to compromise and cooperate (power-sharing) and to accept the government for which one did not vote but which others, and in larger numbers, did, representative democracy breaks down.

The importance of cooperation and compromise also follows from the need to respect others' views. A representative democracy requires both a government and a society in which the approach to decision-making and problem solving involves cooperation and compromise and that this is behaviour practised in everyday life. In this the suitability of design of the political system with respect to the differences and diversity within a country plays a role: as illustrated, positively, by the case of India and, negatively, by the case of Northern Ireland from its formation until the Good Friday Agreement.

As consideration of the contrasts in the events that followed, the Chartist and Russian petitions also showed the chances for representative democracy to be established and sustained over the longer term are affected, positively, by being at peace with other countries.

Conclusion

The practical-ideal of representative democracy is the best that representative democracy can be in the reality of inevitable problems faced: incompatible interests that may even be in direct conflict, constraints of costs and time; pressures against democracy from within political institutions and from other sources of power – economic or social or the media – and outside events such as war. The necessary and sufficient conditions of the practical-ideal are those elaborated above under the headings: 'Elections and Voting,' 'Parts and Political Parties,' 'Rights and Freedoms,' 'Rule of Law Not State Violence,' 'Neutral Bureaucracy,' 'Active Society' and 'Cooperation and Compromise' as attitudes and behaviours within society, within political parties that form governments and within the design of the chosen political system.

It follows, that what the practical-ideal of representative democracy is not is a political system where issues are settled not through cooperation and compromise but by violence; where diversity and differences of interests and opinions are not valued; where opportunities for different opinions to form and to be expressed are lacking; where information is false or (deliberately) inadequate; where the political system works to the benefit of a privileged group over the interests of the community; where the distributions of wealth, education and welfare are skewed away from the poor without measures seeking to address the inequalities; and where citizens are hampered in their capacity to form voluntary organizations and to engage in concerted action.

It also follows that democracy of the representative kind is not imposed from above but is sustained through the dynamic relationship between government and society.

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